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## SPANISH LITERATURE

# Seeking the subterranean spring

Henry Gifford

ANTONIO MACHADO

Selected Poems  
Translated by Alan S. Trueblood  
316pp. Harvard University Press.  
£17.50.  
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Machado, as Alan S. Trueblood says in the opening words of his comprehensive and well-considered introduction to this volume, is held by most Spanish readers to be their greatest poet since the seventeenth century; but he has no corresponding renown abroad. Born in the same year at Ralke, 1875, and thus (to name two poets with whom particularly he can be compared) ten years after Yeats and five before Blok, what claims has he to an international standing? Lorca in the next generation is still the Spanish poet who appeals most to foreign readers, and not only because his execution at the start of the civil war places him among the many martyrs exacted from poetry by the modern age. Lorca is so obviously brilliant, at once sophisticated and popular, a vivid, mobile intelligence, passionate and haunted by death - in many ways he accords with our suppositions of what a poet from the land of the bull and the *cante jondo* ought to be. Whereas Machado in the last two decades of his life - which ended just before the defeat of the Spanish republic - was overtly hostile to the new tendencies of post-war poetry, and in the opinion of many (though it is disputable) had achieved his most telling work by the age of forty. Was he really as significant for the world outside Spain as one might suppose he deserves to be, from the attention now being lavished on him by students of Spanish poetry?

Professor Trueblood's discriminating anthology, with its very readable and resourceful English renderings facing the Spanish text, and its lightly handled erudition, will enable those in the English-speaking community to come at least to some broad conclusion. The choice of poems has been made carefully, though one may regret certain omissions. The 'Lament for the Virtues and Lines on the Death of Don Guido', the Andalusian gentleman who was addicted to 'the blood of bulls and the tune of altars', could have shown Machado at his most successfully ironic, and 'To a Dry Elm', written a few months before the loss of his young wife through tuberculosis, marvellously articulates the sense of time and raises out of despair the poignant hope of a miracle. Yet it has to be granted that, apart from a few possible changes in emphasis, there is little more we could ask from the selection. Trueblood has been at work on this edition for fifteen years. It is the best indication into the poetic legacy of Machado for the general reader, and those already familiar in some degree with his poems, and the no longer neglected prose, will find that both commentary and translation repay their study.

There were three events in what might have seemed a life starved of opportunities, which between them fashioned and completed his character as a poet. The first was the good fortune of attending the one school in Spain that could help an intelligent boy to find himself - the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, where he encountered a teacher whose example he always cherished, Francisco Giner de los Rios. From Giner he learnt above all the necessity of dialogue, and faith in systems, an idealism, and faith in humanity which never deserted him, even in the atrocious civil war that he had to see. His elegy for Giner in 1915 assigns to the master, these parting words: 'Try simply to be good, to be / I have been among you; spirit, / *¡Dios bueno y no más!* repeatedly "The lives" (which seems here to have yielded a place to the not dissimilar poem, "The Olive Trees") of the good villagers / who had drab sergeants and who cut your / "lives" wood with their hands'. He calls on José María Palacio to visit the cemetery where his wife lies buried, because Palacio is his "good friend". And for himself, he claims, in his "Portrait" that soliloquizing is to speak

with a "good friend / who has shown me the way to love of humankind", and he wants to be called "in the best sense simply good". It was this simple goodness that drew him to Tolstoy's way of thinking, and even persuaded him early in 1918 that the Russian revolution might save Europe through Tolstoyism. Yet if he was naive about what he did not know at first hand - the true nature of Bolshevism - he had no illusions about the Castilian peasant, and the cruelty that could alternate with the goodness. Machado remained all his life a liberal, but an uncommon one, whose optimism ventured often into the dark regions, and who was deeply troubled by something akin to the Angst of Kierkegaard.

The second determining event was his move from an unburdened life in the literary circles of Madrid to the provinces where he became a schoolmaster. This was in 1907, and he went to a remote city in Old Castile, with a proud history, and a landscape that he came to feel had always been familiar to him. Machado was, like Giner and many talented Spaniards - Velázquez, the poet Becquer (much admired by him) and among the younger poets of his own time Lorca and Rafael Alberti - an Andalusian: on the face of it wholly alien from Castile. But there are, as he explained when writing of Giner, two kinds of Andalusian, and the "great Andalusians" are "the living antithesis of the flamboyant Andalusian, restless, bragging, extravagant and a friend to all that glitters and makes a noise". Giner (and Machado here describes himself too) was "simple, austere to the point of saintliness, a friend to right proportions and exact measurements". (In this their innate classicism may have something in common with that of certain Sicilians.) Machado, when he arrived in Soria, had already freed himself from Rubén Darío, "that great poet and great corrupter", whose example of melodious incantation held a threat to sane poetry not unlike that of Swinburne, or of Balzac in Russia. He had learnt all he could about the notation of mood from Verlaine, and his own voice - a firm and distinguished voice - was beginning to establish itself, with a few notable successes. The experience of Castile enabled him to escape from imprisonment within the lyrical self, as much a problem for him in these years as it was for Blok; and it also brought him to reflect on the future of Spain, just as Blok in his poems on Russia - the series called "Motherland" (*Rodina*) - tried to understand the past and future of his people.

For both poets the landscape is inseparable from its history: Blok lives again through the fourteenth-century battle of Kulikovo against the Tatars. Machado recalls the time when Soria was still a bastion on the *estremadura*, the frontier steadily being pushed forward, and he reflects on the military tradition of Castile turning his back so humbly on fate. This place of woe, this seat of war, a land undying and a land of death, as Trueblood felicitously renders the lines, Blok's love for Russia is poignant, troubled, fraught with anxiety. Machado, not sharing the personal sense of guilt that weighed on Russian intellectuals, can be at once intimate with Castile, and detached from it. He appreciates the austere landscape, the tardy spring, the flowers among the rocks, even the bitter cold on the heights when the snow comes sifting down and blows into your face. And he is constantly aware of what the Castilian peasant undergoes, becoming a truly Georgic poet, *¡fandisco labrador!*, "picturing myself as a farmer", to quote from a poem written early in 1913 when he had left Soria for good.

This was "One Day's Poem", which followed soon after the shock of the third crucial event in his life. He had married, at thirty-four, the girl Leonor Izquierdo, then sixteen; and three years later she was dead. Machado's despair was checked only by one thing, the success of his newly published book of verse, *Campos de Castilla*. But he fled from Soria, to the borders of La Mancha and his native Andalusia - a town (a no man's land, like Yonville

L'Abbaye, "cold, damp... sprawling and sombre". "One Day's Poem" is what Coleridge termed "the Nightingale", "a conversation poem"; but, as is so often true of Machado, the conversation takes place almost entirely with himself. "So here I am," it begins, "a modern language teacher" - who had lately been a poet, "master in gal-saber, / apprentice to a nightingale", and now alone in an ill-lit room, on a wintry day of monotonous

board, in 1916, Machado never aimed to become a professional philosopher, as Eliot did at one time. He had been attracted by Unamuno's intensely personal wrestling with the issues of life and death, and was caught up, like him, in the debate on Spanish destiny, which the so-called "generation of '98" opened after the loss of Cuba and the Philippines. Unamuno he described once as "the discoverer of a new rhythm for liberals", whose work was



rain, listening to the no less monotonous, inexorable clock. When finally the rain eases off in the evening, he gathers up umbrella, hat, overcoat, to visit the back room of the pharmacy, where he overhears, rather than participates in, the *tertulia*, the well-beaten track of conversation among the regulars. These are *mojitos*, *de provincia* as oppressive as anything Flaubert described, and Machado indeed disgusts him by its sloth and vacancy. But the poem seems to the dusky room and the pharmacy, to a different order of time from the ticking of the clock, and also from Bergson's notion of *la durée*, or time as it is experienced by the living person. He thinks now of the seasons in their cycle, those planetary rhythms in the open country which, as he says elsewhere, flow more slowly than one's own blood. Machado at one point addresses his thoughts to Miguel de Unamuno, whose new book - most probably the famous treatise *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* - lies on his table, along with a work of earlier date by Bergson, the *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*. Bergson (he appeals to Unamuno for agreement) with all his ingenuity cannot "perform / like that Immortal, the immortal handspinning on the tightrope". Bergson fails to consider what Kant faced boldly, the questions of God's existence and man's immortality. In this poem Machado shows what it is to live with speculations, to feel philosophy as something interwoven with the tissue of one's own experience.

Unamuno was an important presence in Machado's life. That philosophy of yours which is all dilettantism, inconstant, walking tightropes, is mine as well, Don Miguel. It was he who helped free Machado from sinking into himself like Juan Ramón Jiménez, a poet whose path initially had been not unlike his own, in the footsteps of Darío and Verlaine, but of whom Machado was to say, as early as 1904, his dreaming had turned away from "real life". Unamuno, it has been remarked by Aurora de Albornoz, was for Machado, as for all thinking Spain, an animator of ideas, one who "set a series of problems which Machado solved or tried to solve in his own way". The death of Leonor undoubtedly inclined him to consider philosophical questions - he even read for a degree in Philosophy and Letters, which was awarded to him, with Ortega y Gasset on the examining

board, in 1916. Machado never aimed to become a professional philosopher, as Eliot did at one time. He had been attracted by Unamuno's intensely personal wrestling with the issues of life and death, and was caught up, like him, in the debate on Spanish destiny, which the so-called "generation of '98" opened after the loss of Cuba and the Philippines. Unamuno he described once as "the discoverer of a new rhythm for liberals", whose work was invariably "disquieting and suggestive". In Unamuno he encountered "living knowledge, wisdom". "Wisdom" [*sabiduría*], to which Machado himself aspired, is not a compact body of doctrine, a system even though he was strongly attracted to Plato. It is rather the ability to live with paradoxes, as Unamuno attempted to live with them, and its manner of expression tends to the aphorism. Hence his admiration of Nietzsche. It was, of course, only "the good Nietzsche" he accepted - "subtle and profoundly psychological, who strove so hard to bring philosophical thought once more to the living waters themselves of life" - the last phrase, italicized by him, is from Saint Teresa. In his open letter to Machado of 1903, Unamuno had urged him to look beneath the hard crust of Spain for "the water that runs there, water of the subterranean spring". This is a favourite image of Machado's, and in "One Day's Poem" he defines Unamuno's thought in the same way: "Water from true springs / welling clear, / flowing on: / poetry, sprung from the heart." Philosophers, after all, he contended, are "poets" who believe in the reality of their poems". Machado found for himself that it was the most satisfactory procedure to pass to and fro between poetry and philosophy, and always with a distrust of those who claim to be in "possession of some absolute truth", however modest the absolute of that truth may be. Every conclusion, must he have said, is the result of a *sabiduría*.

This irony he found especially in Andalusian folk culture, or "folklore" as he preferred to call it, and also in that of Castile. It is something embodied in the popular language, and used consummately well by Cervantes. Machado's own father had been a collector of folklore, in the form of ballads, riddles and traditions. When Machado searches for wisdom through his poetry, it will be expressed in the brief gnomic or aphoristic forms of a poetry "rooted" as Trueblood explains: "In folklore and regional traditions". Trueblood, as other critics have done, discerns in this preoccupation of Machado's from 1909 something of Nietzsche: for him a "master of the aphorism and the epigram", and (even more, one might suppose) from a forerunner in Spanish verse, the fourteenth-century rabbi and physician San Tobías, the "don San Tobías" named in "Proverbs and Songs". In the years following "One Day's Poem" Machado turns

frequently to such forms, and although he still writes the occasional fine lyric, much of his verse is a rumination on truth and poetry, never mad but as the heart prompts and the spirit of irony then questions. A main impulse of his writing in these later years is to define an *ars poetica*.

Several of the observations quoted above were not directly his own. During the years when he lived in Segovia (to which he was transferred in 1919) he invented two spokesmen for himself, Abel Martín, poet and philosopher, from his native Seville (1840-89), and Martín's disciple Juan de Mairena, poet, philosopher and "rhetorician", also from Seville (1865-1909). Mairena expounds the ideas of his master, and comments on his non-existent works (there are some actual poems too), in front of a class, in the informal Socratic manner of Giner de los Rios. Mairena's views may generally be taken as Machado's, but by attributing them to this imaginary person Machado, at once distances them from himself and can be dogmatic without commitment to any absolute. The *cursus* of Mairena before his class, with the occasional calling of a pupil up to the blackboard, are another form of conversation between Machado and his "good friend", the moralist within him. They are a supplement to the poetry, a testing ground for ideas on his art, on philosophical questions and on society, and they freed his verse to round off its own achievement. The lyrical poems continue, beside the "Parables", "Jottings" and "Proverbs" that hold his aphorisms. There are the lyrics addressed to a second love, in the Segovia period, "Guitomar", and some meditations on "the nakedness of the self", as Trueblood puts it, "in the face of the irretrievable, the unknown, the void" - all associated with, or attributed to, Abel Martín. When Trueblood claims that Machado's "work is integral" and that it "exhibits slow organic growth", in assenting to this we should recognize that the poetry (whether or not it includes the *Apocryphal Songbook* of Martín and Mairena) is the sure sign of a major poet - because his mind could always refresh itself at play with Mairena. He could remain Machado by deputing to the ever curious Mairena, at ease in his seminar, the speculations and arguments which, if allowed to flood into the poetry too soon, would have meant repeating in other forms "One Day's Poem". And a major poet does not repeat himself: he returns to go forward.

Machado was fortunate in being able to have his apparent disadvantages so that he could develop freely. Those twenty-five years, the most productive of his life, as a secondary-school teacher in the provinces, even though from Segovia he was able to visit Madrid every weekend, could only have been endured by a man with deep inner resources. In Soria of course there had been the happiness of his marriage, and in Segovia he found some congenial younger men whose project of establishing a free university for the people interested him. Yet even from benighted Baeza he could write to Unamuno that "these spiritual deserts were not truly Spain than the Atacama in Madrid: 'I have lived four years in Paris and there I learned something, though it was little.' (He had attended Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France.) In six years of wandering among fifth-rate misfired towns [*poblichones*] I have learned infinitely more. I don't know how it is for others, but everyone is the child of his experience."

What then did that experience offer this always detached and solitary man? It gave him, in the first place, a moral landscape. Old Castile became for him what the Cambray mountains were for Wordsworth or, as W. H. Auden put it, "the exact match of his own mind". But, in a way that neither of those poets exactly matches, he was able to record his voice with the voices of the people who inhabited that landscape. He came to value (immensely the "amalgam" of experience and judgment, of measured sense [*sentencia*] and neatness [*gracia*]) to be found in the sayings of the people. The sayings have those qualities, he said, when "you meet them evenly

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## Touches of the pharaonic

J. Mordaunt Crook

PETER A. CLAYTON

**The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt: Artists and Travellers in the 19th Century**  
192pp. with 175 illustrations, 30 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £16. 0 500 01 284 9

JAMES STEVENS CURL

**The Egyptian Revival: An introductory study of a recurring theme in the history of taste.**  
249pp. Allen and Unwin. £30. 0 04 724001 6

In 1861 there was a crisis at Sir John Soane's Museum. The first curator, Soane's chief clerk, had died within months of a Parliamentary inquiry into the museum's organization. The Royal Academy nominated as his successor a sculptor, draughtsman and self-taught Egyptologist named Joseph Bonomi Jr. Three trustees resigned, claiming that any curator was statutorily required to be an architect. But Bonomi stayed, and - quite appropriately - devoted much of his time in office to studying the museum's greatest exhibit, the Egyptian sarcophagus of Seti I. Bonomi, in fact, if not an architect was at least a designer of both the Egyptian Temple Mill, Leeds (1842), and the Egyptian Court at the Crystal Palace (1853), to say nothing of his own eccentric house, "The Camels", Wimbledon Park, Surrey. Anyway, that sarcophagus had been Soane's pride and joy: he bought it in 1824 for £2,000, effectively outbidding the British Museum, and in the following year held a three-day reception in honour of its acquisition. Its discovery by G. B. Belzoni, in 1815, forms one of the highlights in Peter Clayton's engaging anthology, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt*. And its exhibition at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, in 1821, is just one of many curious incidents recorded in James Stevens Curl's wide-ranging survey, *The Egyptian Revival*. In a way, in the heart of the Soane Museum, surrounded by architectural fragments, Greek, Roman and Gothic, that sarcophagus symbolized the marriage between archaeology and architecture which lay at the root of all architectural design between the Renaissance and the Modern Movement. Bonomi's appointment prophesied divorce.

The rediscovery of Egypt - like the rediscovery of Greece - was a Romantic, serio-comic adventure. Belzoni, for instance, was a wandering Italian who first made his name as a circus strong man. "The Patagonian Samson", with "Burkhardt's backing, and with Henry Salt - Britain's Consul General in Cairo - playing the part of an Egyptian Lord Elgin, he achieved, in 1815-19, an astonishing series of discoveries. He was first into the temple of Rameses II at Abu Simbel; first into the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings; first into Chephren's second pyramid at Giza. From Philae he brought back the Bankesian obelisk, still standing in the park at Kingston Lacy, Dorset. From Karnak to Theban he dragged the colossal head and arm of an Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh. From the Ramesseum at Thebes he prised away the colossal bust of Rameses II. "The Younger Memnon": "I found it, with its face upwards, and apparently smiling on me, at the thought of being taken to England." Shelley saw it soon afterwards in the British Museum. "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair." At Thebes again, among the Tombs of the Nobles, Belzoni crashed through heaps of "broken mummies... bones, rags and wooden cases" in search of precious papyri. "What a place of rest!", he wrote. "Every step I took I crushed a mummy." (One passage was choked with mummies... I could not avoid being covered with bones, legs, arms and heads. The purpose of my researches," he adds without apology, "was to rob the Egyptians of their papyri." And even Egypt was not enough. In 1823 "the Patagonian Samson" set out to find the source of the Niger. He died at Benin, of

dysentery, on the road to Timbuktu.

In architectural terms, the Egyptian Revival was Rocco before it was Neo-Classical. Piranesi's eclectic vocabulary gave ample scope for Nilotic forms. But those forms were still haphazard. The archaeological clement only began to approach precision with two formidable publications: D. V. Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte pendant les campagnes du Général Bonaparte* (3 vols. Paris, 1802; English edn, 1803); and the Commission des Monuments d'Egypte's *Description de l'Egypte* (24 vols. Paris, 1809-29). As Curl points out, these volumes "were to the Egyptian Revival what Stuart and Revett were to the Greek Revival". But unlike Regency Greek or Regency Gothic, Regency Egyptian never developed into an indigenous style. It remained an alien import: not really a style in its own right; simply the most bizarre option in the Neo-Classical repertoire.

When John Foulston, for instance, designed an Egyptian library (now Oddfellows' Hall) at Devonport in 1823, he conceived it as only one element in a veritable spectrum of styles:

It occurred to him that if a series of edifices exhibiting the various features of the architectural world, were erected in conjunction, and mightily grouped, a happy result might be obtained. Under this impression, he was induced to try an experiment (not before attempted) for producing a picturesque effect, by combining in one view, the Grecian, Egyptian, and a variety of the Oriental. . . . Should the critic be indisposed to admit the full propriety of thus congregating in one view, several buildings of different styles, the author trusts he has [at least] preserved himself from the abomination of having exhibited a combination of styles in the same building.

In other words, Regency Egyptian was one of several alternative modes, not yet an ingredient in a new synthesis. Pugin dismissed such things as "the carnival of architecture". Modern

critics like Carol Meeks prefer to talk of "symbolic eclecticism". With the disintegration of the Renaissance tradition under the impact of Romanticism, the resources of the past were beginning to be fully explored. Neo-Gothic, Neo-Greek, Neo-Egyptian, Neo-Oriental: styles equally exotic, equally remote in time and place, but not yet equally assimilated or equally understood. Classical archaeology was still far more sophisticated than its medieval or oriental counterparts. Foulston's Egyptian library may well have pleased Napoleon's Egyptologist, Denon - we know it did - but less indulgent critics said it reminded them of Piccadilly rather than Thebes. Few Regency Egyptophiles were as subtle as Thomas Hope.

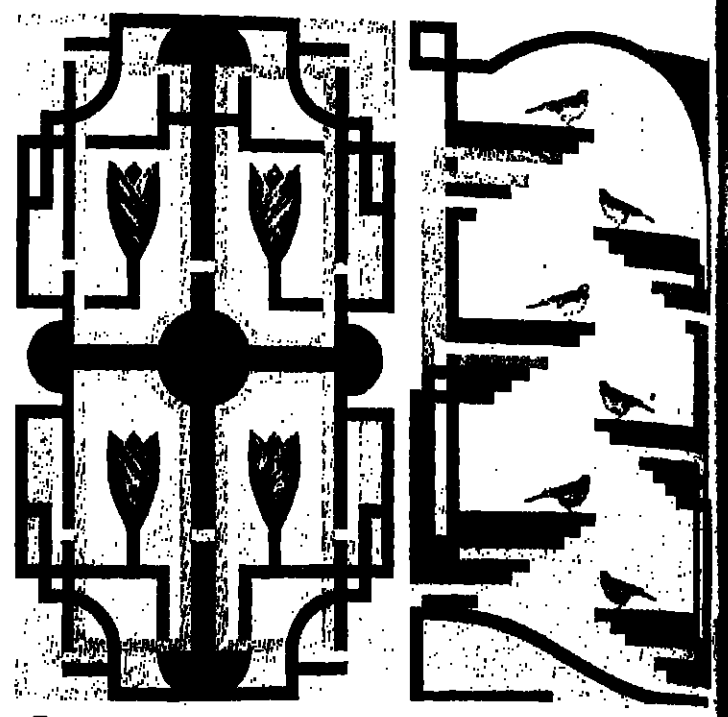
After the 1840s - when, for example, the Rosetta Stone made possible the deciphering of hieroglyphs - the Egyptian Revival entered a more powerfully historicist phase. Furniture from designs by Owen Jones or Christopher Dresser would not have looked out of place at Abu Simbel. The Egyptian Temple at Antwerp Zoo (1856), for which Bonomi acted as adviser, might even have deceived the priests of Isis. The movement seemed to be heading for an archaeological cul-de-sac. But the potentiality of Egyptian elements as ingredients in an evolving synthesis had, in fact, only begun to be exploited. In the 1860s and 1870s Alexander Thomson of Glasgow - almost as Egyptian as he was "Greek" - found endless inspiration in both the symbolic and abstract qualities of Egyptian forms. Hence his admiration for the architectural fantasies of John Martin, and the paintings of Turner and Roberts. All three suggested the "mysterious power of the horizontal . . . in carrying the mind away into space". Thomson's elemental compositions seem worlds away from the surface facility of Art Deco. But both draw upon the same source: the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 was as big a landmark in the Egyptian Revival as Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. The Luxor Cinema at Twickenham (1929), the Pyramid Cinema at Sale (1930), even

the ladies' rest-room at the Streatham Astoria (1930) - symbols from the age of the Pharaohs seemed by no means out of place in the world of Cecil B. De Mille.

Symbolic eclecticism? When in 1920 Sir Frank Baines, Director of HM Office of Works, suggested an Egyptian National War Memorial at Hyde Park Corner, Sir Thomas Graham Jackson felt moved to protest. "Anglo" Jackson - an eclectic himself if ever there was one - pulled the stylistic rug from under his own feet when he attacked Baines's massive pylon for its use of outworn symbols: "Symbolism belongs to the time when people could not read and had to be taught by pictures instead. It lost its meaning as knowledge spread, and was brushed aside by artists as art matured. The higher art really began where symbolism ended."

Such matters lie outside Clayton's range. But Curl might well have made

the problem of eclecticism a major theme. Instead he shifts the emphasis of his study backwards, to a movement's progenitors. His five chapters - the first half of the book - deal with Egyptian revival survivals, before Napoleon. There is much intriguing material here, but wider questions have to be left. Schinkel's Mozartian stage-set, for example, transcends archaeology: such fantastic historicism permeates only in atonement art? Curl's chapter, "The Egyptian Revival in the Twentieth Century", hints at a synthesis along the lines of Hitchcock's fantasy of 1929: evolution, in fact, his eclecticism of taste to eclecticism of style. In the astonishing Egyptian bedroom designed for Lord Belper at 7, Marble Arch (c. 1900), archaeology and invention are brilliantly balanced. And in the Hoover Factory of 1931 eclecticism finally triumphs over undiluted historicism.



Two "pattern paintings" by Richard Kalina, reproduced from *Ornamentation* by Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway (297pp. Allen Lane, £25.00, 1976).

## BRITISH HISTORY

## Cutting down on the cloth

Edward Norman

A. J. ENGEL  
**From Clergyman to Don: The Rise of the Academic Profession in Nineteenth-Century Oxford**  
122pp.  
Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
£22.50  
0 19 822606 3

For one to doubt that the secularization of education has been one of the most determining features of modern culture: it is now hard to imagine a time when the clergy of the Established Church controlled the universities. At the start of the last century higher education was the preserve of young gentlemen, serving a temporary period in their colleges before going on to their parishes; at the end of the century, the academic profession had emerged as a career for life, and its members, usually laymen, usually described "the modern young Don" as "an open derider of religion" and "an agnostic in the majority of cases".

Today, the separation of religion and higher education is so complete that professional intellectuals find it difficult to conceive that their predecessors had other priorities. The social history of the past two centuries is now taught and largely written about as if the Churches were merely instruments of social control provisionally discarded as the secular enlightenment proved its autonomy.

Perhaps the secularization of knowledge would still have occurred, at about the same pace, even had the clergy retained their control: the Church of England has disclosed an extraordinary ability to secularize itself in all manner of other ways - doubtless it would have in this, too. Contemporary church schools, for example, are virtually indistinguishable from secular ones, both in their failure to associate the

acquisition of knowledge with distinctly religious values, and in the styles of moral discourse which pervade their assemblies.

The milestones on the road to the secularization of the university teaching profession are familiar: the Oxford and Cambridge Royal Commissions of the 1850s, the foundation of the secular University of London two decades before, and the Test Act of 1871. As new universities came to be founded, towards the end of the nineteenth century, they were all free of church control. What A. J. Engel has achieved in this splendid and scholarly book is a detailed case-study of the most important instance of the growth of academic professionalism: the University of Oxford. It must be said at once that this is a book for the specialist. Here the general reader will find no ripe anecdotes of the intellectual life, no gleamings from the port-saloon inhabitants of the common-room as they pursued their trivial rivalries and discussed their inconsequential theological niceties. This is an austere academic study, lucidly and economically written, with just the right amount of illustrative material to substantiate the leading points. It is one of the best books to have been written about the nature of education in the nineteenth century.

One of the first things to emerge is that the transformation of Oxford, from nursery of the clergy to smoking-room of the secularized *professores*, is that it was largely the work of the clergy themselves. It is true that the government intervened - with the Royal Commissions of 1850 and 1871 - but it was in response to battles among the clerical dons themselves that these bodies were set up, with internal parties appealing to outside commissions brought no new breath of fresh air from the outer world - their findings and conclusions accorded with those of particular groups within the warring factions. Despite appearances to the contrary, Oxford in effect

reformed itself from within: it was the existing dons who sought to professionalize themselves. Sometimes they did it because they entertained lofty notions of the purposes of university education; sometimes because they sought security; most times because of hatred of their opposed colleagues' viewpoints. In Dr Engel's pages the reader will find the advocates of research, of better teaching arrangements, or of revised relationships between the university and the colleges. But what he will most find is dons intriguing to get job security: that was the foundation of the modern academic profession. How little things have changed.

Another characteristic of the transformation that emerges from Engel's study is how small was the part played by the Science v Religion controversy, so beloved of church writers and others who have sought to understand the ponderous bases of the modern world. Engel certainly describes the champions of science and analyses their contentions. But there is no sense in which their opponents constituted the "Church Party". The clergy, once again, had divided among themselves. The Commission of 1877 was strongly in favour of extending the facilities for teaching the natural and physical sciences, but when, by the end of the century, dislike of science had become a feature of college particularism, this was not from straightforward obscurantism or clerical hostility to the new Truth. It was a result of a whole new set of internal rivalries imposed by financial considerations - a matter of deciding where depleted resources should first lie. For the Great Reaper, economic determinism, had entered the grove.

Some of Engel's most interesting new insights relate to the effects of the Agricultural Depression of the 1870s upon college incomes. Not only did it radically diminish the cash available for all the new schemes of the contending parties; it also led to a decline in the incomes of the Church of England, and so made the prospect of a parish ministry even less alluring. The Depression therefore tightened the screw: the clerics who favoured the professionalization of the University had an additional reason for wishing to stay within its walls - one established upon the sure foundations of economic self-interest.

In another area of their domestic circumstances, too, the clerical dons were becoming restive: the matter of celibacy. The restriction of nearly all fellowships to unmarried men was clearly an obstacle to the development of collegiate teaching into a professional career. Change here came slowly. It was not until 1869 that New College became the first to secure an alteration to its statutes which permitted fellows engaged in tutorial work to get married. The celibacy rule, in most normal circumstances, acted as an incentive to leave the world of higher education for the vocation of marriage. It guaranteed that fellows of colleges were young men. Most dons felt the restriction extremely trying; Engel writes of their "bitterness about it. Indeed, compared to this grievance, the unhappiness of the Dissenters at not being able to get into the place at all until the mid-century seems as nothing. Previous writers have tended to evaluate the reform of the ancient universities in the nineteenth century almost wholly in terms of a Nonconformist crusade, leading, in 1871, to their great champion, Gladstone, opening up Anglican preserve in an act of justice. Engel's emphasis is rather different. For him, the Test Act of 1871 represented a substantial victory for the proponents of the tutorial profession". The debate, again, was the internal one over "opposing fundamental conceptions of the proper qualifications for a collegiate or university teacher". The passage of the Act, while not deciding what the qualifications for being a university teacher were, at least established that religious belief was not among them. It advanced considerably the notion that

the academic life and the clerical life were not unalterably united. In this, as in so many other things, the general nineteenth-century growth of the professions was reflected.

The Oxford changes were conservative, however. The idea that a pastoral relationship existed between the teacher and his pupils survived in a quasi-secularized form - and does so to this day, as one of the great merits of the Oxbridge "system" - and the colleges came through more or less intact. In Oxford the colleges emerged in a stronger relationship to the university than they did in Cambridge; in both places, however, the change of personnel, from clergymen to secular professionals, was achieved within the existing (if moderately reformed) structure. It was a copy-book example of the pragmatic and piecemeal nature of the nineteenth-century reforming process in England.

The Oxford Movement hastened change in Oxford. The uproar over the writings of the Tractarians, and the notoriety attaching to their ideals after the defection of Newman to the Catholic Church in 1845, have some importance in the story of the secularization of the university. Oxford could no longer be regarded as a bastion of the Protestant Church by law established. Within its confines, at the very centre of its intellectual power and influence, there had grown the noxious weed - so it seemed to their opponents - of Romanism. What was the point of having clergymen in charge of higher education if their own grasp upon national spiritual values was so tenuous? By an unpleasant paradox, one of the most spiritualizing forces in modern church history contributed to the secularization of learning in England. Most of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, furthermore, were opponents of university reform. One of them was not. Pusey was a critic of the fellowships system. No wonder a motion calling for his name to be included in the new calendar of saints was presented last week to the General Synod of the Church of England.

## Aesthetics of emptiness

C. Vita-Finzi

PETER REYNER BANHAM  
**Scenes in America Deserts**  
228pp. Thames and Hudson. £8.50. 0 500 01292 X

JOHN MCPHEE  
**Basin and Range**  
216pp. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux (distributed in the UK by Faber). 0 374 09194 1

WILLIAM GARNETT

**The Extraordinary Landscape: Aerial Photographs of America**  
183pp. Boston: Little, Brown (distributed in the UK by Hutchinson). £40. 08212 15078

In February 1968, Reyner Banham became, in his own words, a desert freak or, to be more precise, an "American-desert freak". He was disconcerted by the conversation, even more by his inability to explain it. The failure of the beauty of the desert to conform to conventional standards was only part of the problem. Professor Banham was astonished to find that, as Masters and Johnson might well have put it, he was capable of experiencing a "pure aesthetic response". He knew that his Anglicanism was not to blame, for the Biblical allusions that would have aided his reactions in the Old World were ineffective in the New, and he looked for clues in the actions and motives of his predecessors.

Not surprisingly when the author is an architectural historian, two of the desert dwellers who claimed his attention were Frank Lloyd Wright and Paolo Soleri. When he was good, claims Banham, Wright was incredible, but by the time he built Taliesin West he could be kitschy or

pretty-pretty. And before he became a senescent old show-off Wright viewed the desert with the same powers of observation and heightened perception as Banham does. Soleri, who was drawn to Arizona by Wright, preaches the opposite to Wright's universal suburbia, namely the concentration of mankind in a few structures separated by empty nature. The difference is partly a product of the forty years between Broadacre City and Soleri's Arcosanti, during which the motor-car has turned from saviour to demon, and partly a reflection of Soleri's instinctive European hankering for walled cities. But the point is academic one. Arcosanti, in Banham's view, is doomed to remain incomplete while building remains in the hands of unskilled volunteers. The only way to finish the job is to call upon professional engineers and large-scale corporate financing. Not that Soleri, any more than Wright, has produced structures that are sympathetic to the desert. Why, even the Santa Fe style, derided by Wright as "mexicanized palazzo", does better.

Other artifacts and artificers make their appearance between the purplish landscape descriptions, tips on desert driving and autobiographical snapshots that make up the remaining scenes. They include the Anasazi Indian site of Mesa Verde, compelling in its geometrical purity; the oases spawned by rail and road; and the solar telescope at Kitt Peak, "the most marvelous and moving of all mankind's works in the desert". One of the twelve plates in the book shows the author dressed for the rodeo skimming across the salt rind of Salton Lake on a tiny bicycle. He describes the ride as "a whole-body experience". The image confirms what the text had already suggested: that Banham is a Futurist in his veneration of wheels (especially tyred ones). His concern for safeguarding the desert is correspondingly obscure: "the politics of real-life situation do not permit the laissez-faire

solution", by which he appears to mean that you have to pretend to do something about it. In comparison, T.E. Lawrence, whom Banham dislikes, seems positively straightforward; and one wonders how Doughty got dragged into the title.

Banham thinks the Grand Canyon is just a dirty great hole in the ground. John McPhee's *Basin and Range* is an effort to understand such holes. Originally published in *The New Yorker* - and with the enthusiastic breathlessness that such pieces sometimes display - it combines didacticism with chitchat about personalities in a mixture which is generally engaging. McPhee has tried to distil into a book what he saw and heard in the course of two years spent in the company of various government and academic geologists. Although he focused on the items that interested him most his aim was "to suggest the general history of the continent by describing events and landscapes that geologists see written in rocks". The Basin and Range province extends from eastern California to eastern Utah. Though by no means the only source of McPhee's illustrations it embodies many of the concepts he wishes to highlight and in particular current thinking about the forces that are stretching and thinning parts of the crust as a prelude to the birth of new oceans.

The descriptions of geologists at work are sympathetic and convincing. The digressions into the language and jargon of the subject should prove chastening to its practitioners: McPhee quotes a geological dictionary to the effect that a catolith is a "quasi-magmatic body composed of anastomosing ductoliths, whose distal ends curl like a harpolith, thin like a sphenolith, or bulge discordantly like an akolith or ethmolith". These stratigraphic names that he lists are equally striking in their parochial prolixity. Mississippian, Nebraskan,

Pennsylvanian, Gullian, Niagaran: perverse equation of space and time makes the mineralogists' college of Joesselthite appear inspired.

McPhee reminds the reader that 90 per cent of the picture being revealed by geologists is missing, and that the detective work required to join up the surviving scraps calls for more than He takes us back to James Hutton, who made the first successful plan for the generous allocation of time to geological history, and explains how the concepts of sea-floor spreading and crustal plates ran through most of the stories now being written. The book ends thus: "California will be a geologic island in a matter of time."

Do such books enlighten and inform, or do they merely show knowledge and pass the knowledge by? Take McPhee's account of the hypothesis that an asteroid responsible for the faunal extinction of the Late Cretaceous by wiping out the dinosaurs. The argument converts a complex record of single, universal catastrophe, making no mention of the evidence he promotes, the theory concludes that the age of extinction remains uncertain. It is underlying scepticism that McPhee's enthusiasm persuades.

The desert also features in *Extraordinary Landscape*, a collection of 165 American landscape photographs taken by William O. Cressa during the last 10 years. The magnificent pictures, which some of the most beguilingly horizontal chronolith composed of man-made features, show an unwarranted, and would do prompt many to follow in McPhee's tracks if Garret's book were expensive. Reprinted as a calendar it might acquire the venerability it merits.



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# The new measure of man

Massimo  
Piatelli-Palmarini

MELVIN KONNER

*The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints on the Human Spirit*  
533pp. Heinemann. £16.50.  
0 134 39703 2

At the end of the 1960s many outstanding biologists were already preaching the impending advent of a Science of Man. What "hard" scientists of the calibre of Jacques Monod, Salvador Luria, Francis Crick, François Jacob, Gerald M. Edelman and Peter Medawar, to name only a few, were anticipating was, basically, more of the same hard science: sound first principles, covering laws and a network of deductions flexible enough to accommodate all the complexities of cultural contingency.

Biological anthropology as it is now cultivated in the lush garden of Melvin J. Konner delivers fruit of a quite different taste. Sweeter, for sure, but also softer to the bite. It is fair to say that the hopes of those senior molecular biologists – roughly, the generation of Konner's own teachers – were too sanguine. Whatever biological anthropology turns out to be, in the fullness of time, it is more likely to resemble Konner's judicious admixture of experimental data, middle-range generalizations, narrative skills and plain common sense, than the pyramidal edifice sketched by the subject's pioneers. Their optimism was justifiably grounded on their fresh, unprecedented insights into the innermost workings of the genetic machinery, as well as on a "fit" between molecular structures and general evolutionary principles that was almost too close to be true.

The new bio-anthropological wisdom found additional support in certain elegant unifying approaches to the explanation of behaviour, in the rise of neurobiology, and in bold quantitative advances in basic anthropology, bearing on all-pervasive cultural patterns such as demographic regulation, the management of limited resources, foraging strategies and bio-social adaptation under a variety of ecological constraints. Neo-Darwinian explanations became more and more pervasive, sometimes to the point of involuntary caricature. Assimilating the diffusion of habits to the spread of infectious pathogens, in open competition, seeing every observable trait as the best possible outcome of series of blind trials, the Panglossian evolutionist (to quote Richard Lewontin) felt entitled to account for what still exists, because it exists, for what has long been extinguished, because it does not exist any more, for what nearly succeeded, because it almost passed the test of survival but not quite.

More recent debates in sociobiology have laid bare both the strength and the looseness of this neo-Darwinian cement in holding together the separate pieces of the vast biological puzzle. Konner aims to draw a map of the territory as a whole, leaving none of the earlier approaches out of account, yet himself committed to none. *The Tangled Wing* purports to be a comprehensive textbook of human behavioural biology. In the author's own terms, this is "an impossible ambition": a good textbook of human behavioural biology, which we will not have for another fifty years, will look not like Euclid's geometry – a magnificent edifice of proven propositions deriving from a set of simple assumptions – but more like a textbook of physiology or geology, each solution grounded in a separate body of facts and approached with a quiverful of different theories, with all the solutions connected in a great complex web.

Konner then proceeds to offer a first approximation to such an elusive enterprise. The index of his book reads almost like a catalogue of the capital sins and the cardinal virtues ("Rage", "Fear", "Lust", "Gluttony", but also "Joy" and "Love"). This young and many-talented biological anthropologist from Harvard displays a commanding scholarship, in both width and depth, which is matched by a rare judiciousness and an unrelenting

zeal for subtle nuances. He has been brought up in what is probably the best intellectual environment a bio-behavioural scientist could have, having learnt evolutionary theory from Ernst Mayr, population biology from Richard Lewontin, palaeontology from Stephen Jay Gould, neuro-anatomy from Walle Nauta and Paul Yakovlev (also alas, from Paul MacLean, but more on this in a moment), social biology from Edward O. Wilson, and anthropology from Irvan DeVore and Richard Lee, as well as a variety of relevant knowledge from almost everyone around.

Konner puts all this to the best possible use. The key to all serious science teaching is to present a selection of crucial experiments, stating as carefully as is compatible with expository accessibility their methodology, their findings, and the array of conclusions they afford. Each chapter of Konner's book exploits this essential technique, offering us the ten experiments that have shaped the field. If he overdoes things at times, and lapses into rhetorical complacency, this is a venial sin, soon forgiven when one realizes how much one is learning from him with so little effort. This book has no rival as a sophisticated, up-to-date textbook which one could hand unhesitatingly to a curious teenager or to any motivated general reader. The author is not only a scientist, but also a published poet: why should he tangle his own words? Unlike a textbook of, say, electronic engineering or ontology, this one had to satisfy a host of conflicting requirements. It had to speak of ourselves, as we happen to be, therefore it could not avoid straight history, and even anecdotes. But it also had to cover the basic principles of modern biology, as it duly does. The author himself being part of the subject-matter, *qua* human being, self-analysis was impossible to avoid, be it at the price of an occasional touch of narcissism. Harvard Square, with its jogging, its concert-going, its libraries and its learned assemblies had to be pictured against the immemorial background of eons of evolution, of harsher ecologies than that of Cambridge, Mass. of our lost simian ancestry, of hormonal storms, of chromosomal shufflings and of brains in the making. Konner needed to encompass, almost in a single sweep, biochemical genetics, neurobiology, general physiology, ethology, social anthropology and urban sociology, not to mention the element of narrative, his taste for poetry and his intimations of how we might achieve a better world. These excessive demands must be kept in mind when criticizing Konner for his many errors, but also when appreciating his achievement, which is overwhelming. We will have to wait many years for a more accessible yet equally comprehensive synthesis of human biology.

One final question that some readers may want to ask: is Konner one of those blunt, genetic reductionists, tracking everything down to the genes, or is he a sophisticated environmentalist persuaded deep in his heart that cultural relativism accounts for most of what we do, feel and believe? The only fair answer is that he is both fully innatist and fully environmentalist. A paradox? Well, I am afraid that nothing short of reading this splendid book will remove the taint of paradox.

## Fauna corner

Pat Morris

L. HARRISON-MATTHEWS  
*Mammals in the British Isles*  
207pp. Collins. £10.95.  
0 00 219738 3

For many years anyone wanting a sound guide to British Mammals has had the choice of two: either the *Handbook of British Mammals* edited by G. B. Gorbet and H. N. Southern (1976) or Harrison-Matthews's *British Mammals* (1952). The former contains all the detailed facts and figures, but is written in "handbookese" for reference purposes; the latter was more suitable for general reading but increasingly compromised by its obsolescence and is now out of print.

Dr Harrison-Matthews has now written a completely new book, resisting the temptation to borrow large sections from his previous one. He has left out the diagnostic details of species available in the *Handbook* and instead has concentrated on writing a very readable series of essays on aspects of mammal biology. One chapter offers an interesting analysis of habitat types and their associated mammals, another contains a long overdue denunciation of the

Konner himself may well provide it. He is firm in being anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, anti-compulsive. He does not venture to forecast that women will inherit the earth, but he says, on sound bio-anthropological grounds, that we would all be much better off if they did. His lengthy experience with the hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari desert gives him unique credentials for reassessing the neo-romantic longing for a pristine state of grace. Myths depicting a stone-age affluence, often propounded by distinguished anthropologists from the best universities, are here responsibly checked against a harsh reality. Konner's admiration, deep respect and even love for the hunter-gatherers do not blind him into unwarranted cults of the primitive way of life, and his fact alone might recommend his book.

This bulky volume's one serious shortcoming is embedded in Chapters Seven and Nine, in which Konner heavily overstates the dubious concept of man's "triumph brain", put forth by the neurophysiologist Paul MacLean over thirty years ago and echoed through the popular press ever since. Roughly stated (though there seems to be no genuinely better way of putting it), it asks us to believe that an older, brutish "reptilian brain" is literally harboured within the nobler, more recent and more decent mantles first of the "mammalian", then, on top of that, of the "neo-mammalian" brain, these latter acting like steering-wheels, controllers (at best) or policemen (at worst) of the lurking beast. Poetic, maybe, impressive, for sure, but untrue. More refined biochemical and anatomical analyses have reduced this metaphor to a mere flight of fancy. Since Konner is as conversant as anyone with these findings, the reason for his allegiance to the "triumph brain" is mysterious. Maybe his poetic sensitivity has, for once, overcome his scientific judgment. His reviews of the literature bearing on the evolution of language and mind are perplexingly insensitive to what is being done next door to him, at MIT. One would have liked to see the new and powerful theory of the "modularity" of mind at least mentioned here, and the pioneering work on mental imagery done by such researchers as the late David Marr at least hinted at.

Few people with even the most casual interest in biology can have seen out tracking everything down to the genes, or is he a sophisticated environmentalist persuaded deep in his heart that cultural relativism accounts for most of what we do, feel and believe? The only fair answer is that he is both fully innatist and fully environmentalist. A paradox? Well, I am afraid that nothing short of reading this splendid book will remove the taint of paradox.

multifarious local races and "sub-species" of our rodents. The chapter on home-range and territory is an easy-going, readable review rather than a source of precise facts, measurements or methodological detail. Indeed this characterizes the whole book; it is one to be read, not referred to. There are frequent digressions (eg. a whole page on the large blue butterfly) which might seem a waste of space given that this book is over 200 pages shorter than its predecessor, despite the increase in knowledge of the subject. However, the digressions add to the reader's pleasure and maintain a flow of ideas and novel viewpoints.

The book contains small errors of fact (eg. it was not superstition which led churchwardens to pay bounties for dead hedgehogs, nor was *Glis* first introduced to Bedfordshire) and opinion (the otter is not the only species to suffer seriously from changes in the modern countryside; bats and brown hares do so too). There is also a rather bemused attempt to review the genetic basis of behaviour. However, the main criticism must be that much of the book is learned about the details of British mammals in the past, thirty years yet little new evidence appears in this book. The pioneering naturalists are mentioned, but the major contributions made by younger, more recent ones are often ignored or merely referred to in the bibliography.



"Saint Jerome" by Lucas van Leyden, from the exhibition *Diters & Cézanne: Northern European Drawings from the Ashmolean Museum*, which can be seen there from March 9 to April 17.

## Pro-punctuationism

J. R. Durant

NILES ELDREDGE and IAN TATTERSALL  
*The Myths of Human Evolution*  
197pp. Columbia University Press.  
\$22.50.  
0 232 05244 1

The present work is a lightweight polemic in favour of a "punctuationist" view of human evolution, both physical and cultural. The "myths" referred to in the title are many and varied, and the authors consign to this category virtually any idea on the subject of evolution with which they happen to disagree, but without doubt the one that bothers them most is phyletic gradualism. Eldredge and Tattersall attribute the general tendency among Darwinian biologists to explain evolution in terms of continuous change to the persistence of the Victorian idea of social progress, and they take as their task nothing less than a reformation of the idea in both domains. An introductory outline of the case for punctuationism is followed by a review of the fossil evidence relating to human evolution, an assessment of the problem pattern revealed by this evidence, an analysis of the nature of social change in human history, a discussion of the relationship between biological and social change, and an epilogue on "Our Evolutionary Future", all in well under 200 pages, and without the fuss and bother of scholarly apparatuses as references or a bibliography.

Predictably enough, the result of this ambitious undertaking is that the *Myths of Human Evolution* contains more or less nothing of any consequence to the current debate about the pattern and process of evolution, be it organic, human, or whatever. By refusing to engage seriously with alternative explanations of the evidence relating to punctuationism in general, and human evolution in particular (and let us use the field of historical linguistics as an example), Eldredge and Tattersall have written a book that may just possibly please some of those who already share their prejudices, but who will certainly impress none of their colleagues without it may be supposed they wish to convert. More seriously, the popular work that will merely add to the confusion of those interested in people who turn to it for enlightenment through the maze of contemporary arguments about evolution. For all they are not to be thanked.

## The master's code

William S. McFeely

BERTRAM WYATT-BROWN  
*Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*  
597pp. Oxford University Press. £20.  
0 19 503119 9

This study of the American South begins, oddly, in Massachusetts in 1732 with excerpts from Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux": in Puritan New England, a once-proud member of the gentry is subjected to the pain and humiliation of being tarred and feathered in a medieval charivari. Major Molineux had, in some unexplained way, defied his community's concept of honour. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* ends in Mississippi in 1854 with a story, drawn from manuscript sources, of how one James Foster, Jr, broke his community's code of honour and suffered a fate similar to Major Molineux's:

After a merciless lashing, the lynchmen heated up the tar, while debating whether Foster should be branded on both cheeks, have his ears slit, or be caulked. . . . The decision was for a partial scalping; a complete one would have been fatal. After this was done, tar was poured over Foster's head, shoulders and back, followed by a dousing with the traditional feathers. . . .

While the once-handsome Foster lay groaning, he was, recalled one participant in his torment, simply "an object of universal detestation". Another witness wrote: "Almighty Father, what a picture! He was more like a huge shapeless fowl . . . than anything else." Foster, a member of

one of the leading planter families in the area, had been accused (correctly, it would appear from the evidence that Bertram Wyatt-Brown carefully brings forward) of murdering his wife, but had been set free according to standard processes of law. As he walked out of the courthouse, he was seized by his neighbours and then experienced the retribution they exacted. Somehow, Foster survived, recovered, in part, and fled to Texas where he lived out the century.

Between these well-told tales – one fiction, one history – lies a book in which are delineated the workings of a code of honour that disciplined a whole society in ways usually more subtle but no less effective than the charivari. With his analysis, Wyatt-Brown seeks to explain the antebellum South, but in fact what he provides is an explanation of the white Southern male. As he puts it, one of the essential elements of the code was its "defense of male integrity and mingled fear and love of women". *Southern Honor* is not a book about great public events, nor is it a study of the relationship between masters and slaves, although the way the code worked to discipline any slave who seemed to threaten insurrection – who asserted his manhood – is carefully described. Nor are Southern women, who were forced to live in deference to the men and their code, considered here in a central way.

The book is far more than a statement of the familiar thesis that the rural, plantation, slave-holding South was tardy in its encounter with modernity. Foster, a tall, powerful young male had flaunted his wenching, his drinking, his gambling, but once he had been punished for offending against the unwritten but powerfully realized concept of discipline he "became the male-turned-female, a humiliated coward, the symbol of the

cuckoldry that he had sought to escape in his furious assault upon his wife".

Foster's punishment was an extreme statement of the complex Southern code of honour and Wyatt-Brown, who has read widely in the literature of anthropology, has been wise to use every possible intellectual device in seeking an understanding of his elusive subject. He may, however, have been less than wise to present so much of his material in the manner of the social scientist. He did so, apparently, because he believed the alternative to this was to slip into the sins of the novelist. In his introduction, Wyatt-Brown correctly states that the historian cannot stray from verifiable sources, but then he sells himself short. Too deferentially, he compares what he, under scholarly constraints, can accomplish and what can be done by a writer of fiction whose "imagination can recreate the way people once thought and acted". "Through metaphor and felicity of language" the novelist approaches "an ethical veracity that the historian could never achieve". Not so, Wyatt-Brown has that imagination too, but only too rarely does he dare to use it. When he does, as in recounting Foster's story, he makes the sensibilities of private life the subject of history.

Too often what hampers the historian is not that he dares not make things up – he does not have to – but that he lacks the self-confidence to write as well as the novelist. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, with *Montauville*, and Jonathan Spence, with *The Death of Widow Wang*, both working from manuscript sources not unlike those used by Wyatt-Brown, have shown us how much about private lives can be recovered, shedding invaluable light on the societies in which those lives were led. American historians, like

William Freehling and Eric Foner, have also reached into records of unexceptional people, and one can only wish that Wyatt-Brown, as imaginative as they, had been as bold with the rest of his study as he was with the Foster saga.

What his book shows is that the white Southern male had a tough assignment, perhaps an impossible one. He had to be a master thrice over: of himself, of a family that often included distant relatives and of people belonging to a different race who were or should have been, his slaves. Moreover, this mastery had to be achieved on a shifting frontier, with only uncertain behavioural clues as guides. If Wyatt-Brown is correct, the Southern male's Protestantism was of no use to him, and neither were the canons of political liberalism or the governmental structures that had been built upon them. Not even the South's doctrinal defence of slavery as a "Positive Good", was compelling to him; and he knew, even if he might have denied it, that the American concept of self-reliant individualism was something with which he had no chance to experiment.

He was a man trapped in a society as demanding as it was ambiguous in its values. His urges might be lustful and savage, but he was not free. He was always accountable, always in jeopardy. Any transgression could bring immediate retribution and each local community, almost inexplicably but not capriciously, knew which transgressions were permissible and which were punishable with violence.

And to add to all his troubles at home, this Southern male knew that he had other, more remote, judges. As the nineteenth century progressed, the world outside also told him that he was out of line.

Southern men did not dare challenge what their world defined as honourable – land, power, family and masculine self-esteem. The honour which Wyatt-Brown defines as critical, but does not celebrate, served both to perpetuate the world of the Southern white male and to make it unbearable – for the black men and women and the white women who shared it with him, for their Northern and Western neighbours who refused to let their own quests be limited by the Southern code, and, finally, for the men themselves. Either they could succumb to it as James Foster almost did, or, to find some other outlet for their anger, they could go to war, which is what they did in 1861.

*Southern Honor* is profound and provocative. By showing how the community held even planters to its code, the concept of planter hegemony is challenged; by restoring the idea of honour, without assuming hypocrisy, the Southern "mind" is presented in a new light; by linking lynch law to the charivari, lynching is deprived of its excuse of being merely an aberration and, instead, is established as an integral element in a long-standing system of social control. *Southern Honor* will reopen many old arguments about the South and, perhaps, provoke some new ones about the writing of history.

## On Cultural Freedom

An Explanation of Public Life in Poland and America

JEFFREY C. GOLDFARB

Goldfarb explores the nature and prospects of cultural freedom by examining the conditions that favour or threaten its development in the political East and West. He focuses most closely upon Poland and the United States, investigating a wide range of concrete cases, including the Polish opposition movement and Solidarity, the migration of artists, and the American rejection of mass culture. From these cases he derives a definition of cultural freedom as a set of sociological conditions for cultural freedom. So defined, cultural freedom is transformed from an ideological concept into one with real critical and analytical power.  
Chicago Original in Paperback, February 1983, \$10.00

## Talcott Parsons on Institutions and Social Evolution

Selected Writings

edited and introduced by LEON H. MAYHEW

Talcott Parsons is regarded by admirers and critics alike as a major creator of the sociological thought of our time. Despite the universal recognition of his influence, however, his thought is not well understood. This volume presents 20 of Parsons' essays, which touch on each of the major aspects of his work. Mayhew's introduction discusses the basic tools of Parsonian analysis and interprets the larger themes of his work, the development of his thought, his presuppositions, and his position on the ideological spectrum of social thought.

The Heritage of Sociology series, February 1983, \$24.00

## Saints and Society

The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700

DONALD WEINSTEIN and RUDOLPH M. BELL

The theme of this book is the two worlds of sainthood, the dual realms of flesh and spirit between which saints and their veneration moved and intersected. Its subjects are the men, women and children who, between the 11th and 17th centuries brought perfection, came to be venerated as holy, and received recognition among Roman Catholics as saints. Weinstein and Bell provide a substantial body of information on the people among whom 864 saints lived and by whom they came to be venerated; from conventional and idealized hagiographic biographies, they have gleaned information about religious attitudes and about the social context of these attitudes.  
February 1983, £20.00

## Harold Rosenberg

Until his death in 1978, Harold Rosenberg, art critic for *The New Yorker*, chronicled a rapidly changing period in American art. His imaginative grasp of the contemporary artist's aesthetic and cultural situation influenced not only the field of art criticism but also the practice of art and the process of selection that proclaimed the importance of such major post-war figures as Barnett Newman, Aimee Kory, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, and William de Kooning. Three of his books are being released in paperback in February 1983, at £6.40 each:  
The Tradition of the New (1957) The Abstract Object (1964) Artworks & Packages (1969)

## Romantic Re-Vision

Criticism & Classicism in Nineteenth-Century American Painting & Literature

BRYAN JAY WOLF

Focusing on the works of Washington Allston, John Quidor, and Thomas Cole, Wolf shows the coherence of the early American Romantic culture in relating their works to intellectual and social developments and to critical writings by such figures as Emerson, Irving, and Hawthorne. Wolf also considers the implications of his findings for Romanticism generally; Kant, Milton, Coleridge, Keats, and Friedrich all provide basic points of reference throughout his study.  
February 1983, £22.50

## CHICAGO

The University of Chicago Press, 124 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD



## The pains of blindness

John Mortimer

VED MEHTA

Vedi  
258pp. Oxford University Press.  
£9.95.  
0 19 503005 2

The best age at which to go blind, the eye surgeon told me, is about fourteen. By then you've learned the basic skills, you can read and write and have got your bearings. "Yes. Fourteen's the most sensible," he said. The blind man I knew best, my father, was blind in his forties, with a whole lifetime of print, flowers, landscape and faces to look back on in his mind's eye. The task facing children blinded from birth is almost inconceivable. How do you learn to spell "rabbit" when you have no idea what a rabbit looks like? Indeed, the life of a writer blind from birth would seem impossible, so used are we to thinking in pictures. Shakespeare, in *Henry VI*, has the blind impostor Saunderson Simcox allege that he was born blind and then miraculously cured by Saint Alban. He is tested by being asked the colour of a cloak and, when he answers "red",

condemned. If he had been always blind he wouldn't have known what red was. The eye surgeon also told me of a man who had never been able to see who said, "I know what scarlet is, it's like the sound of trumpets", and of a blind boy who had to catch the cat and feel it to make sure it wasn't a dog. All of which is merely to say that the charting of this unseen world is a subject filled with mystery, fascination and the triumph of the human spirit.

Ved Mehta became blind after an attack of meningitis before he was four. He was thus only offered a fleeting glance of the world he was to chronicle in a number of books of autobiography of which this is the third, and it deals with his blind childhood in India. Mehta wisely, for this is what gives this slight book its power and its unity, forgets his short visit to the sighted world. His memory is based on the feel of faces, the smell of people, and the sound of the headmaster's shoes in a school where all the other feet were bare. This truth telling gives the book a remote, Kafka-like quality and makes you wonder where the blind child gets the courage to endure a life which must have so much unexpected terror in it.

In India blindness in others is no

doubt accepted as we accept minor ailments. Blind children are sent out to beg and Mr Mehta tells horrifying stories of parents blinding their babies, by pouring scalding plant juice into their eyes, so that they may beg more effectively. The acceptance of poverty and disease is the greatest curse inflicted on India by her quiescent religions, and has far worse consequences than many of the undoubted injustices tolerated by Christianity. During Ved Mehta's childhood it was not, apparently, the dark world of blindness that he feared, but the thought that he might be compelled to end his life as a beggar. Mehta's father was a product of the British Raj, a well-to-do Hindu doctor who had qualified in England. While little Ved's mother took him to faith healers who prescribed stinging solutions and beat him with twigs to exorcise the evil eye, his father treated him with a spartan toughness which might be thought harsh even by other English parents who dispatch their children to distant and brutal boarding schools in their tenderest infancy. Hearing of an orphanage school for blind children run by an American-trained Christian Indian principal in distant Bombay, he packed his son off in a train when he was not yet five years

old. "He drew my palms together with his huge ones", writes Mehta of his parting from his father, "said the Hindu farewell 'Namaste', lifted me through the compartment window and said 'You're a man now'." Said of a blind child this must rank high in the annals of parental hypocrisy and self-deception.

When he first arrived at the orphanage little Ved was afforded special treatment. He didn't sleep with the "Jungli boys" but in the principal's part of the establishment. He was given special food such as toast, which he was told was "nice Sahib food", because he came from a "cultural home" and he was treated better than the other inmates who learnt only to cane chairs because their vocation was to become beggars. The story, such as it is, details Ved's absorption into the world beyond the principal's quarters. Although he was given a special bed with mosquito nets in the dormitory when the other boys slept on wood platforms, Mehta established friendly ships with the "Jungli boys", many of whom forgave him his privilege and treated him with kindness.

"In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is King" and one of the most sinister descriptions in the book is of the "Sighted Masters". Schoolmasters may be alarming to anyone, but when they can rush up out of the darkness to assault and beat the victims who can't see them, the nightmare must be almost unbearable. Lying, holding his breath in the dormitory, Mehta thought he heard a sighted master actually kill a blind, deaf and dumb, incontinent boy whose total disability had at last worn out the man's limited patience.

There are moments of cheerfulness. Once the boys were given a bit of rope and allowed to have a tug-of-war, although they were told that the sport was extremely dangerous, and they would only be allowed to indulge in it rarely. On another occasion they were taken to the sea, and this visit provides a good example of Mehta's excellent, sightless writing:

I ran forward to the roar and the rush. The air smelled of salt and coconut. There was hot, grainy, dry ground underfoot. It was so hot that I could scarcely bear to put my foot on it, so I had to run fast, and couldn't stop to examine it. Suddenly I was in the water being carried out. It closed over my head. I forgot everything. I felt I had never been so happy. I was rapidly swallowing water that tasted of tears

- buckets of them. . . I lay on the water, wondering if the sea could take me all the way to the Punjab and I heard the Sighted Master calling me. "That's far enough! Come back! You'll drown!"

The book is full of such images of eventual darkness, of throwing plaster stung round boys' necks and of pretending the boys' constrictors were the class for children to feel, and of an extraordinary incident of children's brutality when Mehta and a friend called Abdul buried a cat alive. This was due to the fact that Abdul's face had been scratched by the murdered animal. "I have lost my fondness for the pussy cat", the blind child said.

Milton, who had far more years of sight than Mehta, and may have had something in common with Mehta's "Daddy" wrote "to be blind is to misery, it is misery not to be able to endure blindness. Through the infirmity I can be completed, perfected; in this darkness I can be filled with light." Mehta seems unlikely to subscribe to this, or to Milton's other conclusion, that God takes particular care of blind people. He has said that he wants to be judged as a writer and not as a blind Indian writer. However, no one is just a writer. Our writing is conditioned by our lives and our experiences and it is ludicrous to the blind Mehta as though he had been brought up, with particularly keen eye-sight, in Weston-Super-Mare. His experience gives his writing its unique quality: it's a world of fear which the strength and humour of childhood flourishes and eventually triumphs.

Fate, which cursed Mehta with blindness, gave him the enormous gift of a way with language. And it is this that has allowed him to escape from the boys whose future was in caning chains, to the *New Yorker* and to the Ford Foundation. But the spectre of the blind beggar is never far away. When he was in his forties he revisited the orphanage school and met a girl called Rajas who had been one of the best pupils when she was nine. She was living in a tenement, up a staircase littered with chickens and sleeping men. When he left her Mehta heard in her voice a note which filled him with an old terror. "Suddenly she started whimpering like a street beggar. 'Bountiful Sahib, a Braille watch. Something to tell the time with for your poor Rajas. I've never had a watch. From you, as you can see. One Braille watch for your poor blind friend.'"

## A trove of trivia

Georgina Battiscombe

JACK HUGHES and BEATRICE MERCER

Dearest Beattie/My Darling Jack: A Victorian couple's love letters  
192pp. Collins. £7.95.  
0 00 218015 4

Boy meets girl. They fall in love. Distance and disapproving parents separate them. They write letters to one another telling of trivial daily events, discussing their problems, protesting eternal devotion. Ultimately, they marry.

The interest of later generations in this very common situation must depend entirely on the quality of those letters. Over three hundred years ago Dorothy Osborne was writing to her lover, William Temple letters which even now make fascinating reading.

Immersed in the rural remoteness of Chicksands she was almost as effectively cut off from the great world as "dearest Beattie" was in suburban Streatham. She numbered a few famous names among her acquaintances; but her Bedfordshire neighbours were not especially amusing or intellectual. Dorothy, however, had a lively, educated mind and the art of making ordinary things appear extraordinarily interesting. Beattie Mercer, who never seems to have opened a book or shown the slightest interest in current affairs, makes everything, even the raptures of young love, seem ordinary and commonplace.

William Temple's letters to Dorothy are lost; Jack Hughes's letters to Beattie have been all too carefully preserved. Jack is a more attractive character than his fiancée but equally illiterate. Here is a random specimen of Beattie's letter-writing style:

Darling I feel I could fill reams telling you of my feelings, but I must think of you dear a bit, don't worry about me. I expect I shall toddle along alright soon. Now if my mother had been alright with us how jolly it would have been. I might have come up and stayed at Lymington Lodge a bit. Accept oceans of kisses and you know you have all my love and do write me a nice long letter pet.

And here is Jack's reply:

You can't tell how anxiously I am awaiting your dear letter of the morning. I have felt so worried and anxious for you darling ever since I left you. I am so sorry dearie to find you are feeling the same, but cheer up dearie, I do think all will be right although I must say I have not been able to convince myself of that, try to

After pages of this sort of thing enlivened only by illustrations which might be interesting were they reproduced it is a relief to find in wedding-day approaching the unexpected speed; Beattie and Jack are to be married in April instead of June. The publishers describe the letters as conveying "the flavour and charm of the Victorian age. How dull people convey anything at all?

## Nativity of a novel

J. M. Cocking

MARCEL PROUST

Correspondence: Tome 9. 1909  
Edited by Philip Kolb  
270pp. Paris: Plon.  
2 29 00930 1

Mémoires chez la Princesse de Guermantes: Cahiers du temps retrouvé

Edited by Henri Bonnet and Bernard Bru  
494pp. Paris: Gallimard.  
2 07 023153 4

Poèmes  
Edited by Claude Francis and Fernande Gontier  
209pp. Paris: Gallimard.  
2 07 023153 7

Since Fallois first published *Contre Sainte-Beuve* in 1954 a good many literary detectives have pored over the great Proust puzzle: what happened in 1907? How did an essay attacking the critical method of Sainte-Beuve suddenly turn into a novel and expand quickly into the four or five hundred pages mentioned in a letter to Lauris? A recently published letter from Proust to Vallette, the editor of the *Mercure de France*, shows that Fallois's guess about the relationship of the essay to the novel was not far from the essential truth. He assumed that Proust had tried to begin a novel in 1908, abandoned it for what was to be a long demonstration of Sainte-Beuve's blindness to the real nature of great writing, found the essay giving rise to personal memories and fictional developments, and allowed these to take over in a now steadily developing novel. This was to begin, Fallois guessed, with the personal memories, and to end with the discovery of Proust's own philosophy of literature, now brought to clear focus in his mind by his attempts to pinpoint his disagreements with Sainte-Beuve.

The letter to Vallette was first quoted in part in 1976 by Philip Kolb, from a sale catalogue of 1962. The

excerpt made clear that *Contre Sainte-Beuve* was by July or August 1909 Proust's provisional title for a novel, which was to end with a long conversation about Sainte-Beuve and about aesthetics. The full text of the letter was published in 1980, and is now included in the 1909 volume of the correspondence. In it Proust is thinking of the "long conversation about Sainte-Beuve" as a sort of appendix to the novel rather than an essential part of it; he wants Vallette to publish the novel as a serial in his review, but would keep back the talk about art until it could be joined to the novel in a book. So, with one problem solved, another arises. When did Proust write the novel of "250-300 pages" to which the essay was to be joined?

The correspondence, now as complete and as meticulously dated and annotated as any human effort could make it, is inconclusive. It does look very much as if Proust's letter of 1908 telling Albuféra that he was working at seven projects at once was right enough; and that his other letters in 1908 and early 1909 bewailing his inability to get anywhere with his writing were also sincere. The novel he offered Vallette in August was, he wrote, "un livre d'événements, de reflets d'événements les uns sur les autres à des années d'intervalle". The detailed patterning of correspondences of feelings and associations between the most apparently disparate experiences was to be one of the great strengths of Proust's novel. But the very richness and complexity of the meaningful relationships which, in a mind of genius, kept presenting and re-arranging themselves on all levels from abstract intelligence to profound onerous feeling, made it difficult for Proust to set them out coherently. Maurice Bardèche, in *Marcel Proust romancier*, showed the importance in Proust's drafting of what Gide called "la part du diable" - the spontaneous offerings and apparently random associations of the subconscious. The multiple repetitions of themes in ever-varying combinations in exercise-book

after exercise-book show that Proust found it almost impossible to control the drift of his inspiration. The beginning of control came when he saw how to connect the beginning and the end of the novel.

And this may be why the evidence in the correspondence of 1909 does not always add up to a sequential and coherent story. Proust had once had to confess, over the abortive *Jeune Santeuil*, that he had been "piling up ruins". He was not prepared, in 1908 and early 1909, to tell all his friends everything about what he was doing. From some, until he was confident that he was at last in sight of a viable structure, he kept the news that he was trying to produce anything more ambitious than the pastiches of 1908 and the critical essay of 1909. A letter to Reynaldo Hahn in July 1909 may mean that Hahn was already in the know about a novel provisionally called *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, but corresponding to the "roman parisien" mentioned as one of the 1908 projects; it evidently transposed Madeleine Lemaire into a fictional figure of fun - this was no doubt the first sketch of Mme Verdurin.

The full text of the letter to Vallette gives firm answers to some questions. Henri Bonnet's detective work on the manuscript exercise-books has answered others. Intrigued by Proust's claim that he had "begun and finished" his novel at the same time, Bonnet wanted to find out how much of *Le Temps retrouvé* was really early. The provisional conclusions he set out in 1973 are now expanded in *Mémoires chez la Princesse de Guermantes*, and supported, with the help of his collaborator, by a meticulous critical edition of the relevant books of manuscript. Kolb had demonstrated more than once that Proust's first idea of putting the "conversation about Sainte-Beuve" after the novel proper had been abandoned in favour of absorbing the Sainte-Beuve material into the novel itself in various ways, leaving Proust's own ideas about art for *Le Temps retrouvé*. Bonnet has set out the further stages through which the

beginning and end of the novel were linked.

In 1909 Proust began to draft his description of Marcel's wrinkled and white-haired acquaintances, seen after a considerable absence; this "bal de têtes", as Proust called it, was to set the permanence of art over against the ravages of time. In 1910 he began to write about what he called "l'adoration perpétuelle", the discovery of spiritual essence through a series of involuntary memories. Then, probably in 1911, he re-drafted both topics, fused now in one sequence. In this version the Good Friday music from *Parafal* was to convey the close kinship between music and literature as Proust understood it.

Such are the intricacies of Proust's reworkings, additions, subtractions, transpositions, that any attempt to follow them through in detail may mean a headache or two. Bonnet and Bru have provided summaries and analyses of the early *Temps retrouvé* manuscripts that will dispense all but the dedicated professional investigator from puzzling his way through the drafts themselves.

By the autumn of 1909 Proust realized how much remained to be done, but was prepared to tell all and sundry that he had embarked on a great work. His closest friends were allowed to read the beginning as it then stood. Yet so deep-rooted was his neurotic fear of failure that as soon as he saw what was to be done he began to be afraid that death would prevent him from doing it. In December he asked whether Lauris would see a first volume through the press if he should not live long enough himself. The first excerpts saw the light in *Le Figaro* in 1912; the first volume appeared in 1913.

The progress of Proust's writing is the main, but not the only interest in these letters of 1909. There are many new items from the Illinois University library or from private collections, including further letters from Montesquieu to Proust and two from Proust to the Comtesse Greffulhe. One

is astonished to find that, in addition to what must have been a considerable literary output, Proust found time for a sustained and voluminous exchange of letters with his broker friend Lionel Hauser about his investments. For a moment he seems to have considered marriage with an unidentified "toute jeune fille délicieuse". There are one or two hints of the murkier side of his sensibility, but also of his wit and sense of fun. This volume of the correspondence is perhaps the most rich and interesting yet.

Proust realized early in his writing life that his talent was for prose, and after the time of *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* wrote poetry only for fun. In poetic prose he moved through imitation to the highest originality; in poetry he never escaped from the themes and images of others. The best of his poems are the light-hearted occasional pieces he wrote to amuse his friends, now collected in *Poèmes* from memoirs, letters and manuscripts; sometimes these are rather difficult to make sense of away from their context. Even here the more or less conscious imitation is obvious enough; most conscious in one or two wickedly deflating pastiches - of Anna de Noailles, for instance, where Proust seems to be mocking his own capacity for lyrical rapture as well as hers. The poems on painters and memories, with their memoirs of Baudelaire's "Les Phares", are reprinted from *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*, with manuscript variants; and the collection opens with a sequence of very early poems, exhumed from manuscripts and given the title of "Les Intermittences du cœur". Their *fin-de-siècle* melancholy obeys the rules of classical prosody effortlessly, with much stiffness and use of *chevilles*. Lines like "Mais vos yeux au plafond de ma tête/Luiron comme des lustres clairs" can awaken nothing better than discomfort or mirth, and such lines are not rare in these early poems. One or two of the later findings from the manuscripts are unpleasantly purulent. The collection is elegantly presented in the new standard format of the new series of *Cahiers Marcel Proust*.

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## commentary

Scene for Tannhäuser at Bayreuth.



'Scene for Tannhäuser at Bayreuth – A Rotting Venus' (1877) by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. A lot in the sale of English Drawings and Watercolours at Christie's on March 1.

## Lines of force

Kate Flint

Bocconi a Milano  
Palazzo Reale, Milan

Futurism was but one aspect of Milan's modernity in the early years of this century. This fact is asserted by the exhibition of images which introduces the exhibition of Bocconi's works in the Palazzo Reale, Milan (which can be seen until March 6). His treatments of the new technological age, of the dynamic relations and interpenetrations he and his fellow-artists saw as animating all matter, are juxtaposed with photographs of speeding racing cars, of a dirigible hovering over the pinnacles of Milan Cathedral and the titling perspective, it offered, of D'Annunzio in an aeroplane, Marinetti on a bicycle. Above all, here and throughout the exhibition, are reproduced scenes which stress the rapid growth of the city and its suburbs: the gleaming interior of the Pirelli works, the lines of factory buildings spreading across derelict fields.

When Bocconi arrived in Milan, late in 1907, he was fascinated by this visible transformation into an industrial centre. 'I feel that I want to paint the new, the fruit of our industrial era,' he wrote. New buildings rise behind him in his self-portrait: in 'Officina a Porta Romana' (1908), 'Il Mattino' and 'Crepuscolo' (1909), he shows the daily procession to and from a smoky horizon. But for more of a sense of the violent simultaneity of modern life is given when he suggests structural change beyond bricks and cement, when he moves to the electrically lit streets to show the crowds, the sudden riots, and the strikes. The presence of the huge, plunging red horse imposed across the scaffolding and smoke-stacks of 'La Città del Sale' (1910) emphasizes the organic nature of the energy Bocconi found running through all contemporary life. The sense of movement did not come just from the changing perspectives of an observer, nor from the shifting effects of light, nor, indeed, from the rushing bodies and revolving mechanisms of modern civilization. Rather, claimed the Futurists, the source of this energy primarily lay within matter itself.

within the lines of force which held it together and in turn interacted with the forces within other objects, whether moving or static. This theory animates Bocconi's subject matter both private and public. In 'La Strada entra nella Casa' and 'Visioni simultanee' (1911) the activity, the noise and the appearance of the street itself drive, wedge-like, into the bodies and, by implication, the consciousnesses of the observing women. In drawings and sculptures of the same period, the head of his much-painted mother, already shattered into angular planes by the light which strikes it, is pierced by the frame of the window at which she sits.

Aggressively, Bocconi demanded the destruction of 'the cult of the past'. But this exhibition rightly gives full weight to the Futurists' immediate, admired predecessors. The Divisionists, with their experimental depiction of light through tiny flecks and streaks of paint, are well represented, as is Medardo Rosso, the sculptor who first, as Bocconi put it, attempted 'to render in solid form the influence of the ambience and the atmospheric ties which surround a subject'. The interest which he showed in the sinuous forms of mid-European Symbolism is not played down, either. Although there is no trace of its mysticism in his later work, the willingness to search for correspondences between art forms permeated Futurist activity. As well as memorabilia of their multi-media events, there is a roomful of architectural drawings by the Futurists' Palladio, Sant'Elia, and a faithful reconstruction of Russolo's noise machine, complete with bear growls, banshee howls and ecstatic choruses.

This is an exhibition which places Bocconi as firmly in the movement which he helped form and which formed him, as within his adopted, developing city of Milan. But Bocconi was killed in 1916. After the war, Marinetti guided those Futurists who remained to the service of his belief that a revolutionary political form demanded a revolutionary form of art. By focusing on one man, and on the historical perspective of his life-time alone, the exhibition serves to present the exciting force of Futurism without raising awkward, but essential, questions about its subsequent links with Fascism.

## For womanly times

Christopher Wintle

MICHAEL BERKELEY and IAN McEWAN

Or Shall We Die?  
Royal Festival Hall

On the face of it, the collaboration of Ian McEwan and Michael Berkeley on *Or Shall We Die?*, a forty-five-minute oratorio concerned with the issues of nuclear arms, seems incongruous. McEwan's writing is lithe, stylish, purged of excess, a cogent testament to the patience and consideration it enjoys. Berkeley's music, on the other hand, is impetuous and flamboyant, not too much bound by formal conventions, and heavily indebted to the English composers of the first half of the century.

Yet this partnership is not so much an essential complementation as an uneven conjunction, the disparities within which are evident from the outset. In the first of the seven sections, the Mother (McEwan's central figure) leaves her sleeping child to climb 'into the hill behind our house to watch the sky'. She contrasts her joy in nature with her fear of the 'sleepless men' crouched over their radar screens. They are innocents, 'male virgins' whose intellects are perilously divorced from their feelings. 'Deep love breeds fear of loss', she concludes, 'our world has held its breath too long'. Berkeley's response to McEwan's classic oppositions is – surprisingly – to focus on the naming of the stars: 'I found Orion, Pleiades, the KIDS'. The extravagant proliferation that follows unbalances the form, and is symptomatic of the excessive vehemence that leads to far too many gratuitous verbal repetitions throughout. In the fifth (and central) section, for example, McEwan's noble simplicity embodied in the transcription of an interview with a mother who survived Hiroshima is lost in a welter of 'compassionate' reiteration. This is matched by too heavy-handed an irony in the use of chorales and Victorian hymn-tunes, and by a Pavlovian response to the onomatopoeic possibilities of the words ('sweep', 'effeminate', 'war', and so forth).

The concert itself had been well publicized, and the Festival Hall was packed. Heather Harper, David Wilson-Johnson and Chorus conducted by Richard Hickox gave their all. There was an ovation from the players; the audience cheered, stamped, whistled, cried for more. The success seemed consummate. Only the sense of the sombreness of McEwan's message was absent from the celebrations.

The words for the oratorio, together with the introduction, are published by Cape (32pp, £4.95, 0 224 02947 9).

## Fifty years on: 'Light in August'

The TLS of February 16, 1933, carried the following review of *Light in August* by William Faulkner:

LIGHT IN AUGUST (Chatto and Windus, 8s. 6d, net) as much as if not more than any of his earlier novels, reveals all those qualities which make Mr William Faulkner's work impossible to neglect, however remote it may seem in some of its detail to the more fastidious reader. From threads of horror, hatred, lust, brutality, and obsession he weaves the intricate pattern of a tapestry dark indeed, yet rich and glowing with a thunderous threatening beauty. Life as he portrays it is terrible, but vital; it is life, not merely existence; and the reader, even against his will, is compelled to participate by the sheer intensity of insight and expression, an almost rhapsodic assurance, an intuition, a nearly tactile sensitiveness in the use of the colloquial prose. Mr Faulkner, it must be said, does not deny love or disinterested friendship – the former at least he depicts beautifully, even movingly, in his new novel. But the story of Lena Grove's simple-headed quest (one might add simple-minded) quest of a fatherless lover whose child she bears before the book is over, and of the self-sacrificing adoration she awakens in the equally simple heart and mind of Byron Bunch, though interwoven with, does not at all balance the effect of the respectively active and passive tragedies of Joe Christmas and of the Rev. Gail Hightower, both dominated by ghosts and terrors of the past.

The illumination that in this month of August falls upon half a dozen lives

in this Mississippi township is the lightning-flash of sudden and dreadful crime. Christmas, a white man but with the dash of negro blood, cuts the throat of the white woman who for months has been his secret mistress, and after long pursuit surrenders himself, to be lynched according to the best – or worst – American traditions. But this is only the framework: Mr Faulkner, moreover, tells nothing, or little, straightforwardly. The murder comes, quite early, then the murders are shown, clearly in a state of manic, almost mad, frenzy. Only thereafter does he dig the soil wherein the roots of this madness flourish; and later still he dissects the seeds from which these sprang. Even then not all is explained, for to say of Christmas that he was betrayed by his mixed blood is to make clear what is suggestive rather than made clear. What is evident is Mr Faulkner's portrayal of his characters, especially Christmas and Hightower, but the others by implication – 'volitionless servants' of an 'irrevocable past'. Christmas's consciousness appears as an automaton, talking and acting as a human being (if a degraded one) but essentially impelled by forces beyond his control or even knowledge. To read Mr Faulkner's novel is to diverting fiction is, probably, to be repelled: to seek in it a philosophy, capable of abstract formulation, is to be disappointed. But it is impossible to deny significance or value to a writer who in the very texture of such a life can evoke so haunting a sense of the richness of simple being, and who can, in aspects of life frankly but not greatly beauty.

## commentary

## The memory of poetry

Simon Berry

NADEZHDA MANDELSTAM/  
CASPAR WREDE

Hope Against Hope  
Royal Exchange Theatre,  
Manchester

Words of Marx and Lenin at either end of the Royal Exchange piazza flank a gigantic banner portrait of Stalin. Kewas megaliths from Red Square and the polished marble of Victorian capitalism stand in sharp juxtaposition, modifying the impact of the steel modular structure that is the interior guest of the Royal Exchange Theatre. It is an exciting setting for this stage arrangement of prose passages and poems by Osip and Nadezhda Mandelstam and Anna Akhmatova in which the clash of private and public worlds can always be heard. The terror that stalked the last five years (1934-39) of Osip Mandelstam's life stemmed specifically from a short poem which mirrored transparently to Stalin, and which was read to a private audience containing informers. It is debatable whether such foolhardiness qualifies to be called tragic, perhaps only in Stalin's Russia could a poet come to see himself in the guise of the boy David.

Mandelstam himself wrote that 'the tragic, however small the scene of its enactment, inevitably amounts to a general picture of the world'. Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope Against Hope*, here adapted for the stage by Caspar Wrede, is astonishingly good at defining the clash of these inner and outer worlds. The three main actors are backed up by a dozen others, anonymously dressed to represent in turn party functionaries, peasants, common workers or secret police. They emerge from the fringes of the round stage to remind us that the figures in this private drama are representative of a million others, each symptomatic of the social disintegration that accompanied Stalinist communism.

In this production the audience is made even more aware of the historical world as elements of it intrude harshly into the theatre. A faint hum heard echoing in the dome of the Exchange, building outside the theatre becomes a hue of dispossessed kulaks, wretched victims of the land collectivization policy applauded by Mnyakovskiy. The Mandelstams leave for their three years' exile in Voronezh on the last night of the production.

## Sense and sensationalism

Stoddard Martin

E. W. KORNGOLD  
Die Stadt  
Deutsche Oper, Berlin

Ernst Wolfgang Korngold, son of Hanslick's successor as doyen of Viennese critics, was the musical Wunderkind of Central Europe during the first decades of this century. His opera *Die Stadt*, based on the novel *Die Stadt* by Georges Rodenbach, was premiered simultaneously in 1920 in Hamburg, Cologne, under Klemperer, and in Vienna, under Strauss. The Vienna premiere, with Maria Jeritz singing the principal role, was marked by Richard Strauss's insistence that a curtain call after each act. The Berlin premiere, with George Schell conducting and Lotte Lehmann singing, was also a triumph, and New York. But critics and managers were not so enthusiastic as musicians and audiences, and wider production of Korngold's work failed to follow. Driven into motion pictures, the composer worked, first for Max Reinhardt and later in Hollywood, where at Warner Brothers he wrote the scores to some eighteen films, including the Errol Flynn Robin Hood.

represented by three railway buggies made of steel, pushed onto the boards of the stage with all the accompanying noise that no special effects could achieve.

The stage events are based closely on Nadezhda Mandelstam's account in her two books, which were translated into English by Max Hayward in the early 1970s. In *Hope Abandoned* she asks a later generation: 'Wasn't it something of a feat to keep a grip on one's own personality and a true sense of identity in our era of wholesale slaughter and the death camps on such a vast scale? Times such as these breed only individualism based on the principle 'every man for himself', not a true sense of one's own worth.' Caspar Wrede's version shows Osip as a Lear-like victim, starved of any market for his writing save a local radio station, preparing himself for the inevitable extinction in a transit camp on the way to Kolyma. David Horovitch plays him with a tetchy bewilderment that tugs at our pity and gives a fleeting sense of what a man he was at the height of his powers. On the other hand, Akhmatova receives a cool, underplayed performance from Dillys Hamlett – sardonic in black fur – only hinting at the intense suffering that was to come to her later on.

Avril Elgar takes the major part, playing Nadezhda as the clear-eyed narrator of the tale. She rises magnificently to it, lending great power to the long speeches that would have benefited from a kinder and more selective adaptation for the stage (we are told early on that the actors' lines are Nadezhda's own words). Caspar Wrede, both as arranger of the material and as director, has interspersed some scenes where his cast have the luxury of representing character, but in general it is a severely Brechtian world they inhabit.

Despite the skillfully created documentary flavour of *Hope Against Hope*, the events of five crowded years in just over two hours, the Mandelstams' story seems almost mythically ageless. As Osip's apotheosis, carrying most of his poetry in her memory for forty years or so after his death, Nadezhda turned the Orpheus and Eurydice legend on its head. It now tells us of the poet's power, not to influence contemporary events – nor the gods – but to give succeeding generations an insight into how he made sense of his world and what values he there found sustainable.

## Scissors in the fire

Peter Kemp

Mrs Woolf's Room  
Channel 4

Despite valiant efforts from the props department, *Mrs Woolf's Room* turned out to be curiously empty. Declaring itself 'a portrait of a writer', the programme was set in 'a room where Virginia Woolf lived and worked, a room of her own, or rather the memory of a room or the memory of several rooms'. Inside this nostalgic warren, Anna Massey as the author – cardiganed, elbow-hugging, face as fixed as a death-mask – paced and pondered.

Visually, the programme emphasized the very different ways of life Virginia Woolf knew. The suffocating clutter of the family home in Hyde Park Gate – a High Victorian conglomeration of swathed drapes, heppings of bric-a-brac, plush and palms and dull red wallpaper – was stiffly reconstructed. After which, the move to Bloomsbury – an airy, pastel milieu appropriate to the ventilating of bright new ideas – looked as much of a relief as it must have been. Usefully attentive to interior décor, the film was far less meticulous when it came to furnishing the facts about its subject. Here, glaring gaps abounded.

The programme's format, concentrating on a solitary brooder in the gloom, virtually excluded the gregarious and humorous aspects of Virginia Woolf. And its résumé of her life was badly understated. While her feminism, for example, received special emphasis, her significant relationships with other women were generally ignored. Her often ambivalent attitude towards her sister Vanessa, her envious, affectionate, competitive, exasperated – was entirely overlooked: as was her in many ways similar response to Katherine Mansfield, who as a far from negligible literary good and rival surely merited some mention. Revealing involvements with men, as well – Clive Bell or Lytton Strachey – were surprisingly passed by in silence.

What seemed especially perverse was that the film jettisoned important episodes in Virginia Woolf's life merely to make room for ponderously airy sequences. Registering her constant awareness of life's howling evanescence, it missed no opportunity of flooding the screen with images of flux. Sun and shade spilled repeatedly

down a hillside. Clouds drifted above billowing trees. Water addled. Waves plashed. And on the sound-track, too, piano notes rippled and dripped. To portray the writer's mental breakdowns, even heavier effects were used. Virginia had a mad half-sister, we were reminded, who once threw a pair of scissors into the fire; fits of mania were invariably signalled by shots of scissors crashing slowly down on to a bed of coals and making the sparks fly. Emphasizing that she was paralysed with depression, shadows washed over Anna Massey as she lay as rigid as an effigy upon a tomb, or an enlarged, inflamed eye – like some giant advertisement for Optrex – secreted a tear.

Such crudely 'sensitive' effects co-existed with instances of insensitivity. An evocative passage about Southampton Row in the early decades of the century – rainy pavements 'wet as a seal's back' and the sound of organ-grinders' music – was incongruously accompanied by film of a modern traffic jam on Ludgate Hill. And there could be more serious discrepancies between what was heard and what was seen. And the photograph of Virginia Woolf's suicide note showed, Anna Massey twice misread its text.

After wasting time with slow-motion shots, the programme left itself no alternative but to leap over whole areas of Virginia Woolf's life. The social world she moved in – documented with nervy, sardonic relish in her Diaries – was by-passed. Nothing was made of her years as a busy reviewer. Nor, astonishingly, was there anything of substance about her novels. 'She writes, it comes easily to her', we were informed; and a nib scratched obligingly across a sheet of paper to demonstrate this. But as to what was written or why, the programme stayed blank. Twice, the camera dwelled over covers of the novels translated into various languages: *El Cuano de Jacob*, *Gaspard*, *Dalloway*, *La Promenade au Phare*, *Le Onde*. But you were given no inkling of what lay behind them. In *Mrs Woolf's Room*, the author's writing, like her personality, remained a closed book.

Glued to the Box, a further collection of Clive James's television criticism from the *Observer*, has recently been published (280pp, Cape, £7.95, 0 224 02066 8). A successor, to *Visions Before Midnight* and *The Crystal Bucket*, it covers the years 1979-82.

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Eric Korn

I fear this may be the sort of topic for easy Edwardian literatores, the kind who write memoirs with paunchy titles like *Lighter moments among my heavier tomes*, but I'm rather fond of odd, false or fanciful publishers' imprints, like Utopia or Ratapolis or Onetropolis or North Pole or Timbuctoo or Vatican Library (much used by eighteenth-century pornographers).

"Published under peculiar circumstances" is a prize, and occurs on a book remarkable in various ways. *Why Priests Should Marry* (Rand Avery, Boston, 1897). In a preface that took the W. Carpenter medal for insincere regre and was entered for the 1900 Olympic Hypocrite event, Rand Avery describes what they call "an unparalleled predicament in book-making". There they were, going about their business in a low-abiding manner, when they were presented with this deeply interesting and important manuscript that happened to be obscene. But the author, taxed with it, had indignantly replied that they would be sullying his fair name without giving him the right of reply unless the public were allowed to judge for themselves. Accordingly, after replacing the most offensive expressions with what they call pious (they are actually cuts, but that would cause confusion) they had gone ahead and published, although much against their own inclinations. They don't actually say that the younger composers were made to work blindfold, but this is strongly implied. Moreover, and this is the chinker, they have a certificate of purity and public good from Anthony Comstock himself.

The title *Why Priests Should Marry*, breathing, as it seems to, a tender concern for the well-being of Roman clerical persons, is misleading. Priests should marry because it might stop them walling up nuns, becoming inflamed by lubricious detail in the confessional or assaulting the organist. The press-work is remarkable. Each page is set within a border of ecclesiastical ornaments — birettes, mitres and pitchforks — shorter deletions are indicated by immensely heavy rules ("he asked her to marry" and she replied "certainly not") while longer censorings are indicated by emblematic designs with suitable mottoes like "the torch of truth shall light the funeral pyre of error"; "the Christian pen in the toils of the serpent of Rome" or "You may strangle the letter but the spirit still lives". Some pages contain very little text at all and if you wanted to know what really happened when the priest asked, the young lady to the nuptial bed, the recorded-in-this-book-are-things-facts-pressed, you had to go to Boston Music Hall where Justin D. Fulton DD, the bigot responsible, had been packing them in for twenty-two weeks.

It set me wondering if such a

technique might not be revived if the present licentiousness proves only a pleasant interim: "Tearing the flimsy garment from his unprotesting loins she AUDI VIDE TACE." "I think you have forgotten this", he leered, while with a brutal gesture he speech is silver silence is golden." Charlotte and Achmed fell onto the Ottoman, the Ottoman fell onto the divan and all three began frantically to wove man nicht sprechen kann darvon muss mann schweigen."

G. B. Moore's *Practical and Scientific Self-Culture* (Self-Culture Society, Chicago and London, 1901) has a deceptively benign title-page, all bedecked and bedrilled with Art Nouveau peonies blocked in green and pink. Thereafter it becomes sterner. "Infringements will be legally dealt with" from the copyright notice, and the next leaf reminds one of the pages the Government used to put in our ration books to test the nation's moral fibre. "Do nothing with this page until you are told", they said, and the nation, showing Courage, Cheerfulness and Resolution, and Whistling while it Worked, treated the pages with superstitious awe, or at least I did. "This book", says the Self-Culture Society, "is the private personal property of . . .". "Don't sign a thing", I want to shout, but the previous owner, one Herbert Marshall, has already done so. It is not to be loaned or otherwise disposed of, as it bears at the bottom of this page an Initiatory Number, which will be of great personal value when I said party becomes an Active Member as per conditions mentioned later on. No 774981. When writing to the Self-Culture Society do not fail to mention the above number."

The Self-Culturing begins after an emollient piece of Ella Wheeler Wilcox ("Do you wish the world was wiser? Well suppose you make a start / By accumulating wisdom / In the scrapbook of your heart"); the advice is unremarkable ("the laws of Nature must be obeyed as their violation can lead to disastrous consequences"), but about half-way through the book's tone again becomes brisker, impatient to get you, as soon as possible, onto the next of a series "our work on Personal Magnetism will contain the cream of scientific information and we would not on any account have you miss it." Chapter IX is entirely devoted to the advantages that will accrue from joining the Self-Culture Society. I mean the Self-Culture Society 774981, and they are considerable: "flowers of gladness will spring up wherever your feet have trodden."

Things become clearer. "By reading this book, and signing your name", I warned you, Herbert — you have become an Initiatory Member". There are seventy degrees of Membership ahead of you still, and buying a copy of that book and reading it has advanced

you only two degrees; you are not allowed to buy Volume II (*Nature's Way to Perfect Health*) until you have sold or given away five more choices. By Volume VIII ("ignorance of these great truths may forever close the gates of opportunity against you, or imperil your safety by placing you at the mercy of some designing person") you will have signed on thirty-five new members, and if you have done it fast enough, you get an Award of Honour of solid gold set with diamonds. (Honestly.) Shortly after that, your adherents will have recruited one thousand two hundred and twenty-five more members, and shortly after that Dr Moore will be doing very nicely thank you.

There is a special offer ("well knowing that you will, after testing the splendid and indescribable results . . .") of twenty or thirty finely executed INVITATIONS TO JOIN OUR SOCIETY. But you have to move fast, the offer expires March 21, 1901. And first you have to sign an Agreement of Membership, declaring that you have "the cause of humanity and the progress of the individual at heart"; and here, or at paying another one pound twelve shillings and sixpence, Herbert Marshall has bawled. Which is why poor Dr Moore had to jog along on the proceeds of less than a million copies, and the world is in the state we see today.

And speaking of self, there was a poster in Bloomsbury offering a course in "Gnostic Self-Freemasonry". I didn't think that Freemasonry was something you could do to yourself, though you could stand in front of a mirror practising those rituals that sound so delightfully risqué when printed in Masonic manuals with a series of initials: "Then the Candidate shall s. h. f. u. b. a. while the Lodge-keeper d. y. b. u. But one man can no more constitute a Freemasonry than he can a conspiracy or a riot. What next? Self-Rotary? Self-Elks? Self-Independent-Oddfellowship? The same poster had the most engaging invitation I've seen for a long time: ENTER THE CIRCLE OF ETERNITY (Nearest Underground: Russell Square.)

Which is what I have long suspected, I felt almost impelled to believe again, but some precision will doubtless point out that I mean Tottenham Court Road.

I swear I am not and never have been a member of any organization devoted to the subversion of meaning and order and their replacement by palindromic anagrams. I have here a list of 135 members of ICTEPECI, The International Conspiracy To Encourage Palindromes Everywhere. Through Continuous Iteration and its front organization WORDROW,

Wielders Of Reversible Dicephalic Reflexive Omnidirectional Words. Among the ringleaders, if that is the right word, is Paul L. Kebabian, PhD, whose book *Lettersquare Palindromes* (21pp, £3.50) has just reached me from the Ababababa Press, 308 N. Bradford Street, Dover, Delaware (funny, I thought they were in Ohio or Alabamababala).

SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS, remarks Dr Kebabian, who knows the value of a strong opening, and observes that although "Arepo" doesn't mean anything, the form is elegant and until now the English language has lacked lettersquares. "This need", says Dr Kebabian, "has now been met." (This what, Dr Kebabian? This need? Doctor of what precisely?)

The need has been met in a fairly elementary fashion. Any combinations of letters of the form abcdw will yield a lettersquare (but you knew that already), so it is merely necessary to make sense of what is produced. Thus XMASAM yields

X M A S A  
M X M A S  
A M X M A  
S A M X M  
A S A M X

which he interprets as a message from Santa Claus ("Xmas Am") signed X. You will now be ready for

M A R A F  
A N O F A  
R O T O R  
A N O N A  
F A R A M

which he construes as "Mar a fan on a rotator. Anon far am." Wild onagers (or tanagers or downagers or teenagers) would not induce me to repeat the little historiettes which Kebabian posits to set this phrase in its context, nor to tell you about the one that begins "Mid ad I Maya, dad".

Kebabian's are mostly of the masculine poor type where words and lines do not coincide; English versions of the full feminine rich form are restricted by needing "rotor" or "radar" or "level" or "madam" or indeed "tenet" as the middle term. I shyly proffer:

R E M I T  
P A R T S  
R A D A R  
S T R A P  
T I M E R

which makes an approximation to sense, and I recommend to other obsessives sellin' / miles, and repot / toper. But shouldn't this whole thing be stamped out now?

"Dianetics", says the ad, or more precisely, "Dianetics®", is "a bright, new science of the mind you can use." Either discuss the notion of a bright new science, as opposed to dim old sciences like physics which tell you things you don't want to know about the unsuitability of pigs for flight or the

inevitable descent of what others write for two pages (without notes) about the implications of a science whose name is a registered trademark.

Lyle's *Principles of Zoology* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1910) is a masterpiece of the "Zoology" and "Beagle" trademarks of Scientific Exploitation Inc. *Summae Theologicae* (Coping Theology, Elysium, NY).

"History", the ad continues, "is a catastrophe" New York Times News of Books. "I haven't consulted the yet, but I'll wager a small sum on some phrase like 'or so disconcerting claim' has been omitted."

The man who can best help me in my enquiries is a Constable. It's Peter Constable, an Elizabethan lawyer poet who appears, under the name of Pietro Contestabile, as the companion of a twenty-line English page beginning with the words "It is church, rightly we may Compo / the Mone . . . to a polyglot collection of elegies on the death of Ludovico (Luigi, Louis) Cardinal d'Este, the man who completed the building of Villa d'Este and patronized Titian."

The collection, *Varii Loci d'Europa Nella Morte dell'Illustre Reverendissimo Monsignor etc.*, edited one Sebastiano Forno Ardesi (Pala Franc, Capponi, 1587), seems to be rare, a word I use sparingly; it is the British Library, nor in any of the other US Libraries, nor in any of the other US Libraries contributing to NUC — at least not under Forno Ardesi or Este or Deste or Veste or even Europe (miscellaneous). The printer is not listed by Cosman, a lister of Italian printers, though *Clavis Typographorum* records that Capponi was active in the one year 1587, so the book must be known in Italy.

There are various Constables, most notably the Henry Constable, author of *The Complaint of Henry*, nor in *Clavis Typographorum* records that Capponi was active in the one year 1587, so the book must be known in Italy.

Further reflection on my earlier letter makes me anxious to clarify a certain point of difference between the struggle of "traditionalists" against "post-structuralists" in Britain and the "same" war in America.

In Britain, where a traditionalist, conservative mode of literary studies has, at times, been used to inculcate the glories of Elizabethan and Victorian England and to perpetuate the entrenched values of the upper classes, "deconstruction" is viewed as a weapon of the Left to demystify the rhetoric of the establishment. In the United States, on the contrary, where the ideas of teachers of literature have been held by individual authors have been predominantly democratic — even egalitarian — deconstructionism has followed in the wake of the Fugitive Poets who transformed themselves first into Southern Agrarians and, ultimately, into the New Critics. John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren and their academic allies. As Alexander Karanikas has demonstrated in *Tillers of Myth* (1966), this movement began with reactionary political objectives and, when its political programme failed, turned to the task of inculcating literary values of the same conservative type as those of the traditionalists against which the British deconstructionists are now fighting.

Paul de Man, in particular, but the entire Yale School in effect, are mystifying literary studies in an effort to cut off students from the reformist and egalitarian values inherent in literary studies in America. By developing an arcane technical terminology and by demanding an exhaustive apprenticeship in the reading of their own criticism (as well as in the works of selected European critics and philosophers), they close off students of working-class background and those who began their studies at public (ie. non-tuition) schools in the American "heartland" (where the foreign language most widely taught is Spanish), or those who took under-graduate degrees at small colleges, where strong programmes in literary rhetoric, German philosophy, and contemporary French thought are rare, and where interest in the relationship of literature to life is paramount.

Such older theorists as M. H. Abrams, Wayne C. Booth and Murray Krieger, and such reacting counter-theorists as E. D. Hirsch, Jr. Gerald Graff and Frank Lentricchia, have eluded right into the hands of the elitists by their willingness to change the subject of discussion from American and British literary works, read in the historical, egalitarian tradition of American teaching of literature, to issues of philosophy, psychology and rhetoric defined by de Man, Bloom, Fish and their ilk.

Each time that I have taken a few moments from my real work to point out the fallacies of the theorists' positions in a letter or a review, an outpouring of fan-mail has made clear that I spoke for a substantial group who would speak for themselves if they could spare the time to read the *Main Agon* of their adversaries. The damage being done to our profession by our unwillingness to undertake full refutations, not only at a theoretical but at a humanistic level, is now becoming obvious. It may be necessary for many of us to submit to the duties of our age to the extent of mastering (say) two or three fallacious arguments upiece and demolishing them publicly, until the pressure of informed opinion drives these mountebanks back into literary studies of some validity of which many of them have shown themselves capable. In doing so, we will dispel the illusion that an egregious display of erroneous novelty is the way to honour, power, riches, fame and the love of women/men.

I should add that most egalitarian American "traditionalists" would join the British academic traditionalists in holding that high standards of literacy, logic and — yes — truth are requisite in literary studies. For we take seriously the assertion of a traditionalist reformer that "the truth shall make you free".

DONALD H. REIMAN.  
The Carl H. Pforzheimer Library,  
41 East 42nd Street (R15), New York,  
NY 10017.

**'The Logic of Natural Language'**  
Sir, — In his review of my book *The Logic of Natural Language* (November 26) Peter Geach took sharp issue with my view that "Something is such that it is an F (which the modern logician renders as 'Ex (Fx)') could be understood as equivalent to the conjunction 'Something exists and that thing is an F'. My rejoinder (Letters, January 14) showed how Geach's argument sophistically applied the schemata of sentential logic to intersentential pronominalization: Geach violates the rules for applying such schemata to cases of back reference. Now Geach (Letters, January 2) denies that the issue concerns pronominals of back reference. In my rejoinder I had used the form 'An A is B and it is a C' as an example of a conjunctive pronominalization. Geach's letter distinguishes between this and 'Something exists and it is an F'. 'Somers' criticizes at length an argument he says I have in my review, about sentences of form 'An A is B and it is a C'. No such example occurs in my review, indeed I there say nothing at all about pronominals of back-reference. . . . Now it is clear, is it not, that 'Something exists and it is an F' and 'An A is B and it is a C' are on all fours in being pronominalizations that employ back-reference by 'it' to an antecedent subject of form 'something'. Both are subject to the constraints regarding the application of sentential schemata to intersentential pronominal reference. In his criticism of my treatment of 'Something exists and it is an F' Geach violated the distribution constraints regarding the univocal occurrence of recurrent pronominals.

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## Professing Literature

Sir, — All short letters on large topics are, by nature, oversimplifications. Yes, G. S. Rousseau (Letters, January 2) is right in saying that theory flourishes elsewhere. But I was flourishing elsewhere, January 7) to responding by representatives of a particular group, all of whom have studied and/or taught at Yale. And, unlike Rousseau, I see a vast difference between theoreticians who develop a broad perspective of literature that ask us in apprehending and appreciating the contexts of creation and all aspects of the author-to-reader communication and to morphemes and phonemes — "a little ink more or less" — or to a good feeling in the gut of the scholar.

T. J. Robinson (Letters, January 2), who seems unlikely to agree with my arguments, however fully developed, might turn to the introduction of Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?* There he will find a repentant sinner admitting that his early criticism was bad because he was trained by the Yale New Critics. On a personal note, I must assure Mr Robinson that my "ignorance" is far from absolute. I've read — and indeed have heavily marked copies of — many books (and, alas, about the modern theoreticians I named in my letter, as well as by Ransom, Tate, Burke and the Yale New Critics. I also believe in humanism as opposed to scientism. I do not think, however, that by attacking an elitist, reactionary political movement that led to an anti-literary doctrine, I was condemning "nearly half a century of American scholarship. There were and are other scholars and other critics: that was part of my point.

Further reflection on my earlier letter makes me anxious to clarify a certain point of difference between the struggle of "traditionalists" against "post-structuralists" in Britain and the "same" war in America.

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197 adhere to the constraints. It would appear that Geach still believes he has the resources for continuing his "checkmating" attack. But the astonishing assertion that he is not subject to the rules for treating recurrent pronominals univocally because he is here not dealing with a case of pronominal back reference at all is a tell-tale sign of the reckless player who presses on without attending to the position on the board.

Professor Geach refers to correspondence whose details I no longer recall. If I have misrepresented his position in any detail, I apologize for it. But the main differences between us are clear. He holds with Frege that the most primitive sentences are what Russell called "atomic". I hold this to be a dogma. He and most contemporary Fregeans hold that term logic cannot do the kind of job recovered from "Assur, Nineveh, Uruk and Babylon, covering between them a period of almost 1000 years" (ibid). If the planetary nunes, as we propose, were applied to active short-period comets, intense meteor showers at fixed times of the year would be associated with them; and these would constitute very practical calendrical markers for astronomer-priests as well as for farmers.

The cuneiform texts that accompany the star lists, associated with the known astrologues but probably much older, further compound the difficulties inherent in the standard identifications. Thus "When the stars of Enlil have disappeared, the great, faint star, which bisects the heavens and stands, is Marduk; he (the god) changes his position and wanders over the heavens" (our italics). Almost the same sentence is found on the Berlin astrolobe, the earliest one known: "The red star which, when the stars of the night are finished, bisects the heavens and stands there whence the south wind comes, this star is the god Marduk." The intended meaning of these texts has never been regarded as clear and it is our suggestion that as a description of the planet Jupiter, they fall; but as a description of a great comet in the ecliptic plane, with a huge but faint red tail bisecting the sky and associated with a fixed meteor stream from the south, they are readily understandable. It seems there is a pier waiting for Professor North's bridge on the other side of the millennium.

S. V. M. CLUBE.  
W. M. NAPIER.  
Royal Observatory, Blackford Hill,  
Edinburgh.

## to the editor

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## 'The Cosmic Serpent'

Sir, — Perhaps you will allow us to respond to J. D. North's letter (January 28) on our book *The Cosmic Serpent*: he did after all comment on review of the book (December 24, 1982) that if its thesis is acceptable, "there is a reason why every reader should be concerned, for the history of the world is at stake".

We note with approval that he does not dispute our astronomical case, for the occasional spectacular and recurring monster in the sky in early historical times visibly coupled with rare and devastating catastrophes. The Encke/Hephaistos comet in particular probably dominated the night sky for over a millennium; it therefore seems to us that a complete reinterpretation of much early historical and astronomical material is needed. However, our concern is not so much to execute such a programme, which is surely a matter for specialists, as to argue that such a programme is in need of execution.

Let us illustrate the point via the

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## The Disraeli Letters

Sir, — That "the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away" is the perspective one tries to maintain when seeing one's work highly praised in the *TLS* but with the credit assigned in the wrong institution. But twice is too often. J. W. Burrow in his review (October 22, 1982) of the first two volumes of the *Disraeli Letters* to be published by the Disraeli Project speaks of them as "edited to the high standard we have come to expect from Toronto", and Vernon Bogdanor in his review (January 28) of Sarah Bradford's *Disraeli* refers to them as "published by the 'Disraeli Project' at Toronto University". The Disraeli Project is in fact located at Queen's University at Kingston, as our extensive acknowledgements to that institution in the *Letters* ought to have indicated. Queen's has been the home of the Project since its beginning, has most generously provided every kind of support for its work, and continues to do so now. As Lord Blake points out in a recent review (*London Review of Books*, January 20), "The world of historical scholarship must be immensely grateful to Queen's University for housing . . . the Disraeli Project." I trust that all who feel as he does will make a point of correctly acknowledging Queen's in future references to *Benjamin Disraeli Letters*, Vol I 1815-1834 and Vol II 1835-1837 (University of Toronto Press, 1982).

M. G. WIEBE.  
The Disraeli Project, Queen's University at Kingston, Kingston, Ontario.

## Subsidizing Literature

Sir, — William Scammell suggests (Letters, February 11) that Charles Osborne (as Literature Director of the Arts Council) had something to do with "killing off" *The New Review*. There is no truth in this. Had it not been for Mr Osborne's efforts, the magazine might well have folded far sooner than it did.

IAN HAMILTON.  
18 Dorset Square, London NW1.

Katherine M. Rogers's *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*, reviewed in our January 7 issue, is published in the UK by Harvester Press at £25 (0 7108 0427 X).

MASSIMO PIATTELLI-PALMARINI is Director of the Florence Centre for the History and Philosophy of Science.

J. R. POLE's books include *Palis to the American Past*, 1980.

CLIVE SINCLAIR's collection of short stories *Red Bugs* was published last year.

JONATHAN SUMMITT is the author of *Pilgrimage*, 1975, and *The Albigensian Crusade*, 1978.

CHARLES THOMAS's *Christianity in Roman Britain, to AD 500* was published in 1981.

DOROTHY THOMPSON is the author of *The Early Churchists*, 1971.

C. VITA-FINZI's most recent book is *Archaeological Sites in their Setting*, 1978.



## Flying the private kite

Neil Corcoran

DEREK MAHON

*The Hunt by Night*  
63pp. Oxford University Press.  
£4.00.  
0 19 211953 2

Randall Jarrell once said of Wallace Stevens that his poems are "obsessed with lack", and the phrase may serve for Derek Mahon too, who, at the end of "The Sea in Winter", the final poem in his last book, found a tentative hope for poetry in Stevens's prescription for "ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds". The obsession is registered at various levels: as a curiously rearguard insistence on the disappearance of the gods; as an unemphatic despair about the present historical moment; as a haunting of his imagination by desolate or deserted topographies; and as a profound scepticism about the value of poetry itself.

At the end of one of the new poems

in *The Hunt by Night*, Ovid in exile becomes emblematic of the contemporary poet robbed of mythology when he bows his head to the "candour" of a blank page. The poem insists that, "Woven of wood-nymphs", the page itself "speaks volumes / No one will ever write". This Beckettian respect for the virtues of silence is always present in Mahon, just below the skin of poems that sometimes dazzle with polish and *brío*, and glitter with an almost pedantic allusiveness. The wit, complication and finish of Mahon's best work, its great stylistic zest, make irony virtually a principle of form. The mock-debonair manner, which perhaps owes something to Corbère (whom Mahon has translated), insists, by pretending that it is feeling less than it should be, that it is actually feeling more than it can express.

A sense of the withheld and the restrained characterizes two of Mahon's preferred forms, the narrow, emphatic triplet, which surrounds itself

with as much blank "Ovidian" space as it can while retaining its plaintive cadences and rhythms, and the eight-line stanza of tetrameter couplets inherited from Marvell via Lowell. One of the triplet poems in *The Hunt by Night*, a celebration of Joyce's centenary written largely in pastiche Finneganesque, concludes characteristically by anatomizing the present as "the dark age / Where the soul swails / With hurtlealt song", but it also manages to take in along the way a wittily aghast translation of HCE into a contemporary domesticity not even Joyce dreamt of in the *Wake*: "Spun-drawers in every / Kirtschen! Airwickers / In ivory bahrrhneum!" And in "Another Sunday Morning", one of the book's tetrameter poems, Mahon uses the form - which can often, even when addressing another in a verse letter, retain a worried solipsism - to acknowledge the dangers of indulgence in the mimatory. He calls himself "a chialistic prig" and imagines his "private kite of poetry" being flown in a London park:

A sort of winged sandwich board  
El-Greco'd to receive the Lord;  
An airborne, tremulous brochure  
Proclaiming that the end is near.

The real chialistic prig could not afford such levity.

But, whatever the consolations of Mahon's poetry - its wit, its affection, its celebrations of light, music and the fragilities of human love - its ground note is always "misgiving". The new volume finds its richest image for that feeling in the great painting by Uccello which gives the book its title, provides the subject of one of its best poems, and is referred to several times elsewhere. The poem on the painting looks at its perfect geometry triangulating a vivid riot of men, dogs and horses into a vanishing point "Masked by obscurities of paint", and relates its "stick figures" to the neolithic drawings found in those caves of the "Where man the maker killed to live". The perception is extended into a moralized, Audenesque conclusion: As if our hunt by night,

So very tense,  
So long pursued,  
In what dark cave begun  
And not yet done, were not the grim  
Adventure we suppose but some elaborate  
Spectacle put on for fun  
And not for food.

The phylogeny of "man the maker" uncovered by the poem, and the emphasis on the connection between killing and living, are given a unemphatically clear-eyed context by the rest of the book. *The Hunt by Night* is constantly haunted by Uccello, and it is perhaps the greatest measure of Mahon's restraint that the structure happen almost parenthetically, literally so in "An Old Lady", a half-lyric apocalypticism comes through the trimeters, as the "not yet done" of the Uccello poem reaches its conclusion: Radiant warplanes come  
Droning up the Thames from  
Gravesend to Blackfriars,  
Westminster and Mayfair,  
Their incandescent flowers  
Unfolding everywhere.

HENRY GIFFORD

*Tolstoy*  
68pp. Oxford University Press. £5.50  
(paperback, £1.25).  
0 19 287545 0

BORIS EIKHENBAUM

*Tolstoy in the Sixties*  
Translated by Duffield White.  
250pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$25.  
0862334700

*Tolstoy in the Seventies*  
Translated by Albert Kaspin.  
174pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$22.50.  
0862334727

VLADIMIR NABOKOV  
Lectures on Russian Literature  
Edited by Fredson Bowers  
330pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.  
£16.50.  
0 39 77886 2

Leo Tolstoy's literary debut in 1852 with his autobiographical novella *Childhood* brought him instant acclaim. Within a few years he was accepted by his compatriots as one of their leading writers and their country's best literary hope. But in the 1860s, when *War and Peace* was being published in serialized form, it was greeted with complaints and denunciations as well as praise. This was repeated with *Anna Karenina* in the 1870s. For us, these two works may be immortal masterpieces destined to be admired by the ages, but for Tolstoy and his contemporaries they were also responses to currently debated issues, such as the abolition of serfdom, reforms in elementary education and women's emancipation. It took many years for Russian readers and critics to become accustomed to the originality of Tolstoy's mature writing manner and to overcome their repugnance for what they initially saw as the pastoral backwardness of his outlook.

Nor was Tolstoy easily accepted in other countries. The famous putdown of his novels by Henry James as "loose, buggy monsters" was clearly based on insufficient familiarity (James knew *War and Peace* only by its French title, which he got wrong, *La Paix et la Guerre*), but it was and still is widely quoted. The 1902 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* found it necessary to inform its readers that the people depicted in *War and Peace* were largely abnormal. As Henry Gifford reminds us, turn-of-the-century English critics were likely to regard Tolstoy as "an elementary force, undisciplined and prodigious", and his novels as lacking in control or necessary artifice.

With the exception of Dame Rebecca West, no one today thinks that debunking or belittling Tolstoy is the thing to do. His two big novels belong to everyone's cultural heritage. But the circumstances of his time and the society in which he wrote are rarely understood in Western countries. Hence, Professor Gifford's concise guidebook, published in the Past Masters series, should prove especially welcome for readers who enjoy Tolstoy's fiction but do not want to bother with the existing full-length critical or biographical studies of him. Within its brief span of some 80-odd pages, the reader is told, in a graceful, informative manner about Tolstoy's life and times and about the meaning of his major writings. The parvies embraces not only fiction but also social, theological and pedagogical works. The book is, in the best sense, a job of cultural mediation, something that Gifford had already done very ably in his collection of responses to Tolstoy (*Leo Tolstoy: A Critical Anthology*, 1971) as well as his numerous other writings on Russian literature, which go back to the 1930s.

But even Gifford's considerable synthesizing abilities cannot cope with the task of covering the gestation, writing, significance and critical reception of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* in the ten or so pages he allows each of these novels. For readers who want an exposition of these matters in exhaustive and revealing detail, there are now, at long

## Simon Karlinsky

last, English translations of two volumes from Boris Eikhenbaum's masterful, multi-volume study of Tolstoy. Boris Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum (1886-1959) belonged to the pleiad of Russian literary critics and historians who first achieved recognition around the time of the First World War, flourished in the 1920s, and were loosely known as the Formalists. The group counted among its ranks such luminaries as Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson and Vladimir Propp. They were, very simply, the most imaginative and creative critics in Russia's literary history, who not only anticipated but in part accomplished what recent Western structuralist and semiotic criticism has done.

Among Eikhenbaum's early achievements were his seminal essay "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' Was Made", a cornerstone of our modern understanding of Gogol, and his first studies of Anna Akhmatova's poetry and of the musical devices of Russian verse. In the late 1920s, he turned to literary historiography, pioneering the concept of *literaturnyi byi* (contextually translatable as "a writer's literary environment"), in which he saw the key to understanding both a writer's art and his system of thought. Eikhenbaum's involvement with Tolstoy first manifested itself with the publication of *The Young Tolstoy* in 1922 (an English translation was brought out by Ardis in 1972). *Tolstoy in the Fifties* (1928) and *Tolstoy in the Sixties* (1931) became instant classics of Tolstoy scholarship, superseding much of what had been written on the subject earlier.

In these two books, Eikhenbaum drew on Tolstoy's diaries and letters and the correspondence of his friends and contemporaries, on the writers Tolstoy read (including many who are now forgotten, but were highly regarded in his time), on memoirs and press accounts, and then combined this enormous mass of heterogeneous materials to recreate, with splendid flair, the very atmosphere of Tolstoy's creative laboratory. Together with his fellow-Formalist Shklovsky's brilliant *Sources and Style in Leo Tolstoy's Novel 'War and Peace'* (1928), Eikhenbaum's two volumes became a basic source for anyone writing on Tolstoy. But none of these three books was ever reprinted in the Soviet Union, and the next volume in Eikhenbaum's *Lectures on Russian Literature* was allowed to appear only after his death. By the early 1930s the kind of factual, all-inclusive literary studies that Eikhenbaum and Shklovsky represented came to be regarded with increasing disfavour in the Soviet Union. Exposed to such objective scrutiny, great writers of the past often emerged less "progressive", less patriotic or less realistic than was required by the official mythology. In subsequent decades, Eikhenbaum withdrew into editorial work, preparing academic editions of Russian nineteenth-century writers.

This retreat did not save him from recurrent vilifications in the press during the witch-hunts of the Zhdanov period after the Second World War. Repeatedly accused of "bourgeois critical methods" and of "groveling before the decadent West", (because he had shown that Tolstoy and other great Russian writers had read foreign authors and were often influenced by them), the great scholar had to abase himself at several public gatherings in 1948, to denounce his own writings and to promise to reform. The hounding of Boris Eikhenbaum, often accompanied by ugly racist slurs about his Jewish ancestry, continued until Stalin's death, after which Eikhenbaum was rehabilitated and allowed to teach and publish again. Even so, the posthumous publication in 1960 of the third volume of his Tolstoy study, *Tolstoy in the Seventies* (a meticulous reconstruction of the origins and writing of *Anna Karenina*), was made possible only at the cost of including as appendices two conformist essays Eikhenbaum was forced to write in the 1940s, replete with the requisite Marxist analyses and hosannas to Lenin's utterances on Tolstoy as the "ultimate source of wisdom on the subject".

These essays were sensibly left out of the new English translation of Tolstoy in the *Seventies*. The two volumes published by Ardis represent the second and third parts of Eikhenbaum's magisterial study (*The Young Tolstoy* is not a part of this series; the first part, *Tolstoy in the Fifties*, is as yet untranslated; the manuscript of the fourth part, covering the years 1880-1910, is said to have been lost during the 1940s, though, considering the treatment of Eikhenbaum during that decade, it may well have been confiscated by the authorities and might surface one day from their secret archives).

The two translated volumes could have been a great boon for those readers and scholars in English-speaking countries who wish to study Tolstoy, but know no Russian. Unfortunately, the two translators have failed to provide badly needed annotations. Eikhenbaum wrote for a literate Russian audience which could be counted upon to recognize the numerous nineteenth-century critics, poets, educators and publications he discusses. In the West, only specialists in Russian literature are likely to be familiar with all these names. How many people in the West will know that the writer referred to alternately as Saltykov and Shchedrin is one and the same man? An unprepared reader would do best to read John Bayley's or Gifford's books on Tolstoy before embarking on Eikhenbaum in translation.

The translations of the two volumes typify the chancy, uneven quality of Ardis's publications on Russian literature. Albert Kaspin's version of *Tolstoy in the Seventies* is very capably done, whereas Duffield White's rendition of the earlier volume is often inept and unidiomatic. He converts Russian literary terminology into English without much regard to its meaning in either language. Thus, *belletrika* is a perfectly ordinary Russian word for "fiction", yet Mr White insists in translating it as "belles-lettres". But *lyazhchnaya slovesnost*, the exact Russian equivalent of the broader category subsumed in French and English by the term "belles-lettres", is misleadingly rendered as "refined literature". In Eikhenbaum's discussion of what he calls Tolstoy's "archaist views", the word "archaist" is read as "anarchist" the first few times it occurs, after which it is translated correctly.

In terms of critical approach, there could be no greater contrast to Eikhenbaum's books than the long section on Tolstoy in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lectures on Russian Literature*. Where Eikhenbaum studies the sources and the roots of Tolstoy's art, Nabokov wants to consider him outside of all contemporary trends or influences. Where Eikhenbaum anatomizes the social and moral issues to which Tolstoy responded by writing *Anna Karenina*, Nabokov examines the ways in which the passage of time is conveyed in that novel and comes up with the surprising and wily convincing discovery that *Anna Karenina* runs on two separate clocks, one for the Anna-Vronsky axis and a different one for Kitty and Lyovin. Eikhenbaum is a cultural historian who wants to place Tolstoy in the perspective of his age, while Nabokov is a literary artist who wants to demonstrate to his students the mechanisms of Tolstoy's artistic structures. Both approaches are equally valid because both Eikhenbaum and Nabokov teach us new things about Tolstoy and enhance our understanding.

*Lectures on Russian Literature* has been reconstructed by Fredson Bowers from Nabokov's classroom notes that date from his teaching days at Wellesley College and Cornell University. The lecture on Tolstoy is the centrepiece, being the longest and containing not only classroom materials but also sections from the projected critical edition of *Anna Karenina*, on which Nabokov worked but which was never completed. In addition to Tolstoy, whom Nabokov placed above all other Russian fiction writers, the volume contains lectures on other writers he admired such as Gogol (a section from the 1944 book *Nikolai Gogol*) and Chekhov (Turgenev, whom Nabokov gingerly



A painted near-dish, marked with a cipher of Nicholas II and dated 1908, with the underglaze blue mark of the Lomonosov Factory, Petrograd, dated 1921, to be offered for sale by Sotheby's, 34 & 35 New Bond Street, London W1, on February 23.

liked; and two famous Russians he detested: Dostoevsky (with whose entire output he shows a thorough familiarity) and Gorky.

Some of Nabokov's views that may seem to us iconoclastic are not quite so shocking in their Russian context. His evaluation of Turgenev coincides with Anton Chekhov's. His dismissive disdain for Dostoevsky was also shared by Tolstoy, Chekhov, Ivan Bunin and Marina Tsvetaeva. (My insistence on the similarity of Nabokov's views to those of some of his Russian predecessors was one reason why my commissioned introductory essay to *Lectures on Russian Literature* was at the request of Nabokov's family not included in the book.) Both in Russia and abroad, the high reputations enjoyed by Dostoevsky and Gorky were all too often based not on their literary art, but on readers' sympathy for the philosophical or social ideas their work embodied. When Nabokov insists that "literature belongs not to the department of general ideas but to the department of specific words and images", he is not expounding an old-

fashioned art-for-art's-sake aesthetic. He is instead combating the notion of literature as an aid for teaching social and political theories, a view that was common to both nineteenth-century Russia and the United States of the mid-twentieth century, where Nabokov did his teaching.

Nabokov's emphasis on the paramount importance of literary art and literary form is his way of liberating literature from subservience to other disciplines. As a one-of-a-kind literary artist he quite naturally found certain of his predecessors more congenial than others. The embroideries on Russian literary themes in his novels *The Gift* and *Invitation to a Beheading* made clear the nature of Nabokov's preferences, which these lectures now confirm. Nabokov was a novelist in a certain definable Russian tradition. It is not clear whether either Tolstoy or Dostoevsky would have found much to admire in his novels. But Pushkin, Gogol and Chekhov would surely have loved them. More than any other twentieth-century writer, Nabokov is their true heir as both artist and critic.

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## The Bajan beat

Fleur Adcock

EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE

Sua Poem

103pp. Oxford University Press.  
£4.95.  
0 19 211945 1

The three parts of Edward Brathwaite's first Caribbean trilogy, *The Arrivants*, appeared in three successive years in the late 1960s. His new trilogy, of which this is the second volume (*Mother Poem*, published in 1977, was the first) is emerging less precipitately and has a narrower focus. *The Arrivants* ranged across the world from the Caribbean to Africa (searching for cultural origins) and to Britain and elsewhere (examining exile). The new work concentrates on Brathwaite's native island, Barbados; larger themes and preoccupations are still present - the gods of Africa appear casually in the narrative; the Middle Passage is not forgotten - but the context is always Barbadian. *Mother Poem* showed us the often desperate lives of women on the island, struggling to maintain themselves and their children with little help from their crippled, inadequate, boss-dominated men; in *Sua Poem* it is male histories and experiences which are explored: "Sun" also includes "Son".

The poem is intricately structured; its pattern is that of the rainbow, moving from red through to indigo, and also that of a day progressing from dawn to sunset, with an eclipse during the afternoon. In the early sections it is a child (rather over-significantly named Adam) who holds the stage, with beautifully vivid, although inescapably symbolic adventures such as a near-drowning by a bully, a plan to make a permanent bubble of air and learn to breathe under water like a fish, and a Sunday School outing to "a wonderful place" (the Middle Passage in reverse); later scenes show fathers and men of the slave revolt of 1816; and in the penultimate section a grandfather dies. There is a brief close-up of the poet's own childhood (a caption, as it were, for the old snapshot on the jacket), but his method is on the whole dramatic rather than autobiographical.

One of the chief characters in his drama, and one of the most political, is language: language here is asserting itself against European/British domination just as the people of the Caribbean have needed to do throughout their history. The varieties of diction range from Standard English to Bajan dialect and beyond, into neologisms, portmanteau words and heavily-loaded multilingual puns. Brathwaite's notes are full of such phrases as "Rasta word", "Calibanism", "Ibo and Bajan/Caribbean". Some of his inventions - "Indigone" for "gone into indigo" and "Noom" for "the sound of noon;

angelus of doom" - are explained; others, such as "malitia" for the cruel soldiery who put down the rebellion, are self-explanatory. Many of the new meanings are achieved by distorting or chopping up old words, across line-endings or by means of oblique strokes: "family buy-ble"; "temptations of evening". This can be enlivening or it can be maddening; the reader is constantly being brought up short by oddities which, together with the need to refer to notes and the sometimes confusing phonetic representation of dialect words, make this initially not an easy work to absorb. A second reading is necessary to release its full effect.

What holds *Sua Poem* together is, above all, its rhythms. The forms of the different sections include (likewise) chant, prose-poetry, conversation with commentary, and more or less conventional verse. But throughout all these, even in the prose passages, there is a supple but vigorous beat, a powerful speaking or singing voice which at its strongest can soar past Brathwaite's self-imposed linguistic obstacles.

## Out of the inbred dale

Anne Stevenson

TOM RAWLING

*Ghosts at My Back*  
55pp. Oxford University Press.  
£3.95.  
0 19 211951 6

One of the chief uses the twentieth century has made of poetry is to establish it as a public vehicle of self-examination and explanation. We accept without question that a poet is entitled to fill out a portrait of himself in poems which, if not confessional in the American sense, nevertheless undertake to record authentic personal experiences with a view to engaging our sympathy and understanding. Tom Rawling's *Ghosts at My Back* belongs in this tradition.

Like Robert Lowell and Seamus Heaney, Rawling reaches back to his childhood, seeking in poignant memories the explanation for his having broken away from his roots. Rawling, though, is a simpler poet than either Lowell or Heaney, and his poems are lucid and straightforward. The personal poems of *Ghosts at My Back* describe feelings which are neither nostalgic nor tinged with guilt. The Ennerrdale of his fathers Rawling sees in the Wordsworthian light of his boyhood:

Ordinary and awesome  
The wind-worn hedge enduring.  
Fell-sides tunnelling the spate  
To mark the salmon's map.  
The repeated miracle of seeds  
The first sleep under the shell.  
How a raindrop can hold the sun:  
My being there  
Intermingled with the dale.

Yet this same Ennerrdale is the "inbred dale / Between clouded crags" that penned Rawling and his forefathers as closely and claustrophobically as it did the family sheep. There had to be "a sort of killing / To stay free". But, of course, freedom was lost as well as gain. Rawling does justice to the claims of old life and new in these poems, which never allow a tone of complaint to spoil their economy and freshness. His book is lovely as autobiography and believable as an appraisal of the difficulties of belonging to a rooted past in an uprooted civilization. I don't know of any poet who has written better of his pride in and rejection of his yeoman stock, nor more tenderly of parents who obviously made much of his early life a misery.

The father, the schoolmaster, "Who came every day to show / He had no favourites", who slipped through a gap in the hedge to the pub "while our also the father who comes to mind with my hands. . . I still plant peas in his domino five." And the mother whose "Knuckles were like snow on the peaks / Hiding sharp rocks, looking back / The warmth of the Spring" was also the mother whose hands were "Happy in the garden, a sharp hoe / For weeds, / For chrysanthemums, / Wallflowers blooming where they'd been put, / Daffodils coming up as daffodils." Portraits of an uncle who offered the risk of the knife he'd sharpened, of a grandmother who knew the importance of eating the beasemilk pudding after a calving, of the cobbler Johnny who taught the boy to tie knots that didn't slip - all these fine

In "War Widow", for example, a photograph provides the catalyst for a poem that portrays the experience of the bereaved woman. A whole history is conveyed in a series of deft observations:

You know I keep the photograph  
beside my bed. It gathers glances  
like I could  
when I swayed my way amongst airmen.

The trees behind you are still  
fresh, your face never changes.

My stocking seams aren't quite so tight.  
My uniform's returned. You wear yours  
somewhere,  
caught in a snap-shot while you slept.

— just enough details are supplied to create authenticity and pathos.

There is no slack in any of these poems: Kathleen Jamie handles her material like a surgeon. Occasionally - in "Women in Jerusalem" and the title poem "Black Spiders" for example - she seems to have cut a little too much away, to have left too much to the reader's imagination. The hidden narrative technique, used so effectively in many of her poems to arouse

clear characters are incidental to the portrait of the poet himself.

And yet, of Rawling's life after childhood we hear little. It is as if, in these poems, Rawling had to make his peace with his past by confessing to it. The sacred sense of continuity he finds in nature he needs also to find in the chain of his ancestors. And through these poems Rawling does indeed seem to regain the sense of place and rootedness which, in youthful rebellion, he had thrust away.

Although Rawling makes rather a point of his secularity, the distinctive strength of this very personal book is, oddly enough, its spirituality. Here is a philosophy, if you like, not of losing your life to find it, but of finding your life or losing it - losing it for ever in the indifference of contemporary society. Nowhere is this seeking for a life-force so evident as in Rawling's poems on fishing. It may or may not be true that really devout fishermen are, in some way, poets; certainly Rawling speaks more than himself in a poem such as "Night Fisherman". The fisherman who loves the fish and yet deceives it to take its life: the theme is as old as history. And again Tom Rawling touches on more than personal experience when he writes a poem like "Fisherman to Salmon" - perhaps the finest poem in this excellent first book.

Audacious your odyssey,  
Salmo the Leaper;  
You were so near your reed,  
Your shrunken gut  
Forbade all feeding;  
Urged you to ripen:  
But you came to my lure.  
Betrayed yourself  
For a feather.

## Getting under their skins

Vicki Feaver

KATHLEEN JAMIE

*Black Spiders*  
29pp. Edinburgh: Salamander Press.  
£5 (paperback, £2.50).  
0 907540 15 5

A war widow, an Arab woman, an English girl in Jerusalem, a girl reflecting ironically on the fact that she is just as likely to leave as the man who is thinking of leaving her - the majority of Kathleen Jamie's poems are concerned with female lives and feelings. Yet, unusually for a woman poet, she gives away almost nothing about herself. It is as if, like the high-wire artist in her poem "Permanent Cabaret", she had hinged at herself "Remain professional", for she adopts either the Stephen Dedalus position - "within or behind or beyond or above (her) handiwork, invisible . . . paring (her) fingernails" - or that of the chameleon poet, continually thinking herself into someone else's skin.

curiosity and to give a sense of a spotlight episode in a continuing drama, can also produce brilliance at last, irritation.

For the most part however Kathleen gives the impression of being kept in control, of being able to mix language perform exactly as she wants. She can convey the feel of a place in a few words: the balcony in "Women in Jerusalem" for example, where "above the flies, / the broad mid-backs, brown Bedouin hunk, weighing and arguing figs". Emotions are portrayed with equal economy: desperate determination of a daughter in "The Barometer" where "no to a fire - it's an act of survival" or the terrified Turkish soldier in "Storm in Istanbul" ("Not even hush / his big boots on could save him / from flinching when his nightly lit mosque was lit from above"). The second stanza of "Permanent Cabaret" reveals in a deceptively calm, anecdotal style the tensions between circus couple:

Their lamp is the last on camp to glow  
Coco reads Jung, sometimes aloud to Estelle.  
If she's sewing on sequins,  
More often she practises alone in the dry  
for the dry she enters permanent cap  
perhaps in Zurich. Coco cracks his  
hand.

thinking vaguely of children, of possible  
repeating the outside of their own.

When she moves into a more allegorical style - in "Five Cows" "The Leaving of an Island" or "The Inner Corps" - Ms Jamie is successful. But there are memorable poems in *Black Spiders* to establish her as a poet of talent and originality.

The Commonwealth Institute and the National Book League have both awarded prizes for the 1983 Commonwealth Poetry Prize, a prize of £500 awarded annually for a first published book of poetry in English by an author from a Commonwealth country other than Britain (nationals of other countries who live in Britain are eligible). Publishers are requested to submit titles published between July 1 1982 and June 30 1983: five copies of each title should be received not later than June 30 1983 (manuscripts cannot be accepted). A brief account of the author's life and work, accompanied by entries, including title and date of the author's birth, and current address. Entries to: Poetry Librarian (Poetry), Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ.

The Poetry Society announces the establishment of a new award for poetry translation. The Poetry Translation Prize: £500 will be awarded, initially on a biennial basis, for published poetry translated into any European language into English. The prize has been established by Mihail Popescu of Bucharest, a translator of Corneliu M. Porumbescu who died in 1977. The Poetry Society will administer the prize and will appoint judges and consultants.

## Monstrous masterpieces

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£16.50.  
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Leo Tolstoy's literary debut in 1852 with his autobiographical novella *Childhood* brought him instant acclaim. Within a few years he was accepted by his compatriots as one of their leading writers and their country's best literary hope. But in the 1860s, when *War and Peace* was being published in serialized form, it was greeted with complaints and denunciations as well as praise. This was repeated with *Anna Karenina* in the 1870s. For us, these two works may be immortal masterpieces destined to be admired by the ages, but for Tolstoy and his contemporaries they were also responses to currently debated issues, such as the abolition of serfdom, reforms in elementary education and women's emancipation. It took many years for Russian readers and critics to become accustomed to the originality of Tolstoy's mature writing manner and to overcome their repugnance for what they initially saw as the pastoral backwardness of his outlook.

Nor was Tolstoy easily accepted in other countries. The famous putdown of his novels by Henry James as "loose, buggy monsters" was clearly based on insufficient familiarity (James knew *War and Peace* only by its French title, which he got wrong, *La Paix et la Guerre*), but it was and still is widely quoted. The 1902 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* found it necessary to inform its readers that the people depicted in *War and Peace* were largely abnormal. As Henry Gifford reminds us, turn-of-the-century English critics were likely to regard Tolstoy as "an elementary force, undisciplined and prodigious", and his novels as lacking in control or necessary artifice.

With the exception of Dame Rebecca West, no one today thinks that debunking or belittling Tolstoy is the thing to do. His two big novels belong to everyone's cultural heritage. But the circumstances of his time and the society in which he wrote are rarely understood in Western countries. Hence, Professor Gifford's concise guidebook, published in the Past Masters series, should prove especially welcome for readers who enjoy Tolstoy's fiction but do not want to bother with



# Decoding the dissidents

Dorothy Thompson

CRAIG CALHOUN

The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution

321pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.50. 0 631 12905 7

This is a book which presents a number of problems to the reviewer. To submit to the temptation to dismiss it briefly may appear high-handed and unjust. To follow through in detail the large number of contentions and reply to them in detail would take up far more space than the work merits.

Perhaps the first thing to get out of the way is the central problem of what kind of knowledge is here being discussed. Craig Calhoun declares that he is not "mainly concerned with adducing facts to settle purely empirical questions" but is "rather concerned with what we are to make of facts which are, in large part, widely known and not in contest". This cover-up, in its characteristic mid-Atlantic language, is presumably intended to protect him against the criticism of

historians, to which his book is indeed very open; nevertheless in the course of the work he is prepared to take issue with most of the historians who have published work on early industrial Britain, including E. P. Thompson, John Foster, Iorwerth Prothero, Edward Musson, Max Hartwell and several others. In attempting to decode the complex language of imagery, symbol and organization employed by popular radical movements of the 1820s and 1830s in Britain, he makes a claim to a higher interpretive discipline than that employed by these and other scholars, a claim which his work signally fails to justify.

Historians have to protest that the study of this period is far from being a collection of "facts" which are widely known and uncontested. On the contrary, much of the history of the period remains obscure, and work is constantly being published which modifies or changes our view of it. Much of this work – for example Prothero's detailed examination of the London artisans – is hardly mentioned in Mr Calhoun's analysis. He is concerned to discuss the values of "traditional" communities in the period, but his very use of this expression, like many others, raises more questions than it answers.

The fact is that Calhoun does not know nearly enough about his material to attempt the kind of overreaching analysis he has offered. To call the Queen Caroline affair "a popular rebellion" betrays an extraordinary lack of understanding of the events

concerned. To believe, as he appears to, that "free universal education" was one of the six points of the Charter is not only a howler, but also a total misreading of the political and cultural attitudes of the manufacturing communities in which Chartism flourished. The radicals of the 1830s were looking to national political pressures to restore and increase their own control over their work, wages and such things as their children's education. They were precisely not asking for state social provision. And if they supported Queen Caroline in her quarrel with her husband in 1820, they did so as a means of registering disgust at the corruption of central authority, at a time, in the immediate aftermath of Peterloo, when few other options seemed to be open to them. If the support for the Queen was based on concepts of "good kingship" as opposed to bad, it is difficult to see why the supporters of King and Queen in Cambridge, for example, should divide so neatly between town and gown, or why working people throughout the country should send addresses of support and gifts to the queen, immortal lady that she undoubtedly was, rather than in a few cases to her immortal but legitimist husband.

Much work remains to be done – or

perhaps to be published, since a great deal more is now known about the Queen Caroline agitation than was formerly the case, but whatever the cause may have represented, it was certainly not a rebellion. There were a number of causes during the century – the Tichborne case was another – in which an inordinate amount of popular energy and enthusiasm was aroused on behalf of figures unjustly treated by the wealthy and the powerful. It may be that such periods of excitement represent an alternative to radical political action, or it may be that they represent the assertion of values, particularly values associated with family life, which the poor cherish and the rich seem to flout. To call them "rebellions" however does not seem either precise or illuminating.

This is a book whose heavy, apt, punctuated with jargon, does not make for easy reading. For those who possess, however, it is not entirely without insights, although its claims to novelty are very much overstated. If there are readers who still undervalue the importance of the manufacturing districts as opposed to the cities as centres of radicalism and dissent, there may be food for thought here, although it is limited by the fact that a strong and premature dichotomy is indicated between factory and non-factory production, a mistaken view in these early years. Disraeli at the time and many writers since, have stressed the closed nature of the communities in which the great part of British manufacturing took place. Historians are beginning to study these districts, including many writers of whom Calhoun is most critical. It is clear that the concept of "class" employed by working-men radicals in the 1820s, 30s and 40s was not exactly the same as that on which Marx based his analysis of capitalist society. It may well be that historians, attracted by the sociological precision of Marx's definition, have ignored, whether using or rejecting the definition, the working peoples' own self-definition, and have failed to understand all that was involved in popular agitation in this crucial period. Unfortunately the present work does not have the understanding and assurance to take us very much further with these important matters.

## Centripetal tendencies

Peter Clarke

BRIAN HARRISON

Peaceable Kingdom: Peacemaking and Change in Modern Britain

239pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50. 0 19 822603 9

The hedgehog, as Sir Isaiah Berlin reminds us, knows one big thing: whereas the fox knows many little things. In *Peaceable Kingdom* Brian Harrison reveals his unmistakably vulpine characteristics. At one point he writes that "it is dangerously exhilarating to attribute all society's evils to a single cause". Fully aware of Marx's contempt for "members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-in-corner reformers of every imaginable kind", Dr Harrison has made it the burden of his career to ferret down the holes and explore the corners in an effort to comprehend the moral world of Victorian social and political reform. Historiographical hedgehogs will in turn look for an over-mild explanation of why our mild-mannered Reynard has time and again been drawn towards the admittedly ever-interesting topics of drink, sex, violence and cruelty.

*Peaceable Kingdom* goes a long way towards providing the answer. It consists of eight substantial essays on aspects of British history during the past two centuries. Three of them – on animals and the state, on religion and recreation, and on Victorian philanthropy – had their origin as articles in learned journals some ten or fifteen years ago. They have been extensively revised in the light of more recent research and one essay at least is barely recognizable as the same piece of work. The other essays are

published for the first time and the book as a whole deserves to be treated as an original and coherent contribution to the history of the period. For all the diversity of matter in it – from anti-slavery and temperance to suffragette militancy and working-class respectability, via social research and the rhetoric of reform – the book exhibits a unity of perspective. The author frankly admits that he was "not aware of this unifying theme when most of the essays were first drafted", but he is now ready to identify it as "a preoccupation with the sources of social and political cohesion in Britain since the industrial revolution".

In directing explicit attention to the roots of consensus, Harrison is not, of course, alone. This has, in a sense, been one of the classic and inescapable problems of Marxist analysis, confronted with the failure of the first industrial proletariat to challenge the apparatus of the capitalist state as effectively as initially anticipated. What makes the present inquiry rather different is really a dual objection to the Marxist schema. In the first place, there is not One Big Answer, whether it be framed in terms of a labour aristocracy or of bourgeois hegemony. Furthermore, Harrison is plainly not going to define his role as that of the historian of "false consciousness", which would be to turn the problem inside out. Thus the implication that Victorian working men who were interested in temperance should have been interested in the class struggle instead, and the presumption that this diversion of attention constitutes the real problem, are alike alien to his approach.

This approach can be defended methodologically by saying that it is more truly historical in its ambition to recover the world-view of persons living at a time in the past, however different from our outlook now – rescuing them from "the massive

condescension of posterity", in E. P. Thompson's vivid phrase. But there is also an undeniable value judgment involved, and one which Harrison does not balk. For he is not just listing out historical sympathy and imagination on behalf of reformist impulses which could otherwise be dismissed as strange and unappealing; he is also commending them as wholesome and effective options in a world where moderation, compromise and consent define what is possible and desirable. Hence his adoption of the mantle of "centrism". The centrist historian, he claims, can transcend a pointless polarization which has developed to the detriment of the profession. This may sound like a one-man historiographical SDP, though Harrison declares himself too much of a centrist to wear such a distinctive party label.

Let us be clear about the supposed virtues of centrism. They do not, so far as I can see, reside so much in the motives, intentions and strategies of specific centrist figures as in the settlement, outcome and resolution of an issue upon a mutually tolerable basis. Hence in politics this does not turn into a plea for a centre party but rather a warning against one. If all parties comprise moderates and fundamentalists, this sets up a structural tendency in the right direction. "The alternation in power of two parties (each with its complement of fundamentalists) is a centrist educational process far more comprehensive for a society than the proliferation of irresponsible fundamentalist groupings confronted by a governmental centre." The two-party system is therefore commended, not because of its explicitly adversarial posture but because of its implicitly centrist function. This is the thesis of the essay, "The centrist theme in modern British politics", which somewhat loses confidence, however,

in concluding that "if the British two-party system successfully promoted political stability in the past, it will not necessarily do so in the future".

The propensity of the political system to absorb the impact of proposals for reform by domesticating the radicals who propose them is nothing new. Bemoaned by purists on the left, with an allusion to the aristocratic embrace, it is a process which has proved more comfortable to cynics on the right, so long as they have kept their nerve. Harrison wants to show the higher rationale of the process, pointing to the positive gains as fundamentalist moral absolutes were transmuted into piecemeal adjustments in the ordering of British society. The shock troops in the army of Victorian reformers had no time for subtleties of approach. "Tact sir, I despise it", declared Benjamin Wrench of the NSPCC. Their enthusiasm and commitment was aroused by a great campaign of good versus evil. Yet they are not presented as preposterous or negligible figures, even though they may have been saddened by the resilient wickedness of the world. Their achievements were ultimately incremental rather than cataclysmic, but this account affirms the reality of their agency for change and – the message is clear – improvement.

In one of the most interesting essays, on the rhetoric of reform, Harrison usefully categorizes the modes of argument with which, at different times, reformers and conservatives

## Gnomic utterances

Craig Brown

PATRICK MARNHAM

The Private Eye Story

232pp. Deutsch. £7.95. 0 233 97509 8

While Patrick Marnham was still writing *The Private Eye Story* rumours were already scurrying about that A was trying to censor it, that B had refused an interview, that C had got his lawyer on to it and that Marnham himself, friendless and paranoid, was rewriting into the early hours.

I first read *The Private Eye Story* some months before it was published. It struck me as dull, solid and sycophantic – very much the sort of thing commissioned by companies to celebrate their first twenty-one years in Lloyds or in the travel business. I felt certain that all the rumours of fuss and bother must have been generated by an efficient publicity office, or alternatively that Marnham had finally decided that he preferred his friends to his book and had consequently caused anything that could possibly excite hurt or alarm.

But in the weeks following its publication, an absurd amount of newspaper news was squandered on yells of pain or delight from anyone who had ever been associated with *Private Eye*. Christopher Booker, in particular, wrote a tirade in the *Speedy* about the book, and Marnham, in a way which Sir James Goldsmith's most kindred ghostwriter might well have considered imprudent. And the book itself remains as flat as ever.

It starts with a thumbnail sketch of the early 1960s, that era which performs so well as a paint-by-numbers pad for so many thumbnail sketchers. "The early sixties have become a historical period," writes Marnham, "before rapidly leaping to the usual old list of Keeler, Macmillan, Osborne, and Lady Chatterley. This section is written ostensibly to set the birth of *Private Eye* in context, but like so much instant history merely achieves a cloying sameness. Unless handled with great skill, placing a minor event in the surrounding of major events will appear to be an intrusion like an under-walker sticking his head into the photograph of a Summit Meeting."

This ill-conceived "feeling" of historical importance bedevils the book not just in the sense that it is silly

to call "Tomorrow's Nicodemus", a collection of verse by Barry Fantoni, "a rare collector's item", or to say "Richard West's *Victory in Vietnam* 'has since become something of a classic', but also because gossip should be fast and throw-away. It suffocates when wrapped in pomp. There are quite a few funny stories in the book, some of them new, and a number of contributors are rude about other contributors, but Marnham's heaviness blunts their blades. Of course, the very fact that *The Private Eye Story* is a glossy, lavishly illustrated hardback is a disadvantage since its subject is messy, cheap and snoggy.

The arguments for and against *Private Eye* itself have been well voiced in the last few weeks. Marnham does not shrink from giving the witnesses for the prosecution their say, though it must also be admitted to the magazine, grimly trying to cut off their right hand while remaining aware that *Private Eye* really allows its grip on its writers – and even on its editor – to slacken. More interviews with outside enemies of *Private Eye* would have been interesting. There are real objections to be made to the magazine and to leave them in the hands of its servants seems a trifle unfair. As it is, even the keenest *Eye* enthusiast will find himself relishing Sir James Goldsmith's pantomime quote: "reported second-hand: 'I will found their wives, even in their widow's weeds'."

If the *Private Eye* contributors who objected to the book had objected to its pretentiousness of its sycophancy, rather than its pitiful modicum of odium, then we would be entitled to think that all was well at Gnome House. Some years ago, James Fenton in the *New Statesman* wrote of Richard Ingrams: "faces that it 'poses' an absorbing problem of interpretation – what are those expressions that disturb (and even strangle) Was that a smile? Was that interest, annoyance, worry, fear?" Ingrams replied that it was the expression of a man attempting to simulate interest in the conversation of James Fenton. One would now expect Ingrams to object to the pretentious title of the chapter on him – "A faint holiness" – and also to Marnham's premature portrait of him as a Great Figure, a rose which falls back on itself and mugs him much more like a Toytown Beaverbrock.

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## As modified by man

G. E. Mingay

DAVID GRIGG

The Dynamics of Agricultural Change: The Historical Experience

260pp. Hutchinson. £12 (paperback, £5.95). 0 09 147790 5

David Grigg's new book marks a further valuable contribution by this author to research in the borderland between historical geography and agricultural history. A masterpiece of conciseness, it sets out in an extraordinarily brief space, and with the aid of some sixty tables and figures, a review of past and current explanations of agricultural change.

The treatment is schematic as well as highly summarized, beginning with the adverse consequences of population growth (Malthus), and its positive consequences (as more recently propounded by Ester Boserup), and ending with short chapters on Marx and Frederick Jackson Turner. In between come discussions of the influence of environment, including recent arguments concerning the treatment of agricultural systems as "ecosystems modified by man", and the influence of changes in climate. The long-term shifts in climate have not been very influential, Dr Grigg concludes, because even in the distant past, technology was capable of adjusting to climate changes, and no doubt is able to do so more easily today.

The section on industrialization and agricultural change includes an account of the nature of peasant society as drawn from the results of Chayanov's studies of the Russian peasant economy, together with western European evidence, which suggests that peasant farms were responsive to the market and were not entirely or very largely concerned with mere subsistence. The process of industrialization has led not only to the replacement of the peasant economy by large-scale commercial farming, but has everywhere involved also a permanent decline in the size of the farming sector, first in relative terms, and later absolutely. A fascinating table shows that whereas the absolute numbers engaged in British agriculture began to fall about 1851, this turning-point in some other industrial countries has been remarkably recent: in Germany the absolute numbers employed in farming fell only from 1907, in the US from 1910, France from 1921, Russia from 1926, and in Japan as recently as 1947.

The changes brought about in the pattern of consumers' food consumption as a result of the higher incomes created by industrialization

necessarily produced major changes in land use, with a decline in the proportion of land devoted to producing wheat and an expansion of the areas concerned with livestock, vegetables and fruit. Another consequence of industrial development has been factory production of increasingly more effective farm machinery, fertilizers and pesticides, together with research which has greatly improved the output and expanded the growing conditions of crops. It is these developments that have largely been responsible for the enormous upsurge in yields (and surpluses) in recent decades, so that it may be said that the true "agricultural revolution", quite dwarfing any previous ones, occurred only after about 1945.

This section ends with a consideration of the well-known effects of the reduction of transport costs since the age of the railway and steamship on the supply and demand patterns for agricultural products, and the author urges the application of von Thünen's somewhat neglected model, put forward in 1826, to farming before the Industrial Revolution. Part Four of the book then goes on to discuss the pace of change: the application of diffusion theory to the speed of technological change in agriculture (an area where the geographers have been active), the problems of defining and measuring agricultural production and productivity, and the author concludes by steering a judicious course through the rocks and shoals of the perennial controversy over the nature and timing of the classical "agricultural revolution".

The emphasis of the book is not on historical evidence but on models or theories of change. The author, as a geographer, is fully aware that a particular model may not be applicable in widely differing circumstances of climate, land tenure, social structure and farm sizes; nevertheless, his work is specifically aimed at those agricultural historians and historical geographers who have ignored – or before this book were ignorant of – the theories and bodies of evidence which might well throw light on their own research. "Agricultural historians, in particular, have been very blinkered and inward-looking, much concerned with elucidating the past of often very restricted areas over limited periods of time – a county over a century, an estate over a few score years, a parish in a single year. True, as Grigg agrees, there have been historians willing to stick out their necks and make sweeping generalizations – notably Wilhelm Abel, Silcher van Bath, Frederick Jackson Turner – but the great majority have felt too inhibited by the contradictions, incompleteness and doubtfulness of the evidence, and as

the author frequently points out, by the lack of adequate statistics before the late nineteenth century. Indeed, one of the most valuable features of his book is the assembling of scattered figures and the collection of them into systematic tables (invaluable for the comparative studies which the author advocates). One caveat must be entered here, however. There is always a danger in putting together a series of figures, some of which are much more doubtful than, or based on quite different sources from, the others. Investigators, lecturers, students are only too likely to ignore the qualifications which surround them and treat them as if of equal validity.

When one takes into account this

## Villains of the piece

R. Merfyn Jones

DAVID JONES

Crime, Protest, Community and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain

247pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95. 0 7100 9008 0

Historians have been carefully dissecting riots and other similar forms of violent criminal activity for many years now, and behind the reports of mob fury and vandalism they have often discovered highly conscious and rational forms of social protest. The "mob" has been replaced by the "crowd" and the crowd has been shown to be capable of purpose and discrimination. David Jones has been a significant contributor to this historical exploration of a difficult and, because of the ease with which evidence can be misinterpreted, rather dangerous terrain, particularly so in his studies of pre-industrial and early industrial unrest in Wales. With this book he has moved that investigation further, and also by spreading his geographical net and also by moving away from an exclusive concern with crimes of protest and considering wider categories of individual criminal activity.

Dr Jones has chosen not to write a general history of crime in the nineteenth century but rather to proceed by means of very wide-ranging case and local studies. This allows him to use available local sources to great effect whilst continuing to confront larger, national, questions concerning the particular rhythm of the rise and fall of crime in the last century. The local studies on the whole confirm the generally accepted notion of a sharp

rise in crime early in the century followed by a decline in later years.

We are offered accounts of crime and of the criminal in East Anglia, Merthyr Tydfil, London and Manchester and there are fascinating portraits of the poacher and of the ubiquitous vagrant. In his chapters on urban crime Jones makes use of some previously unused sources such as the Metropolitan Police's own returns of crime housed in the library of New Scotland Yard. In few other fields of historical research are sources so difficult to handle, and the author confesses that he "regard(s) the criminal statistics with a good deal of suspicion". Statistics often measure police efficiency, or indicate some change in policy or law, rather than informing us about the criminal or about the real extent of crime. Any new material such as that provided here is, therefore, to be welcomed, although in places, its own statistical worth might have been more critically assessed. Jones also uses literary and other sources to draw a vivid picture of respectable society's war against the criminal and his haunts. Notorious refugees, such as Merthyr Tydfil's "Cherry" district, with its own dubious Emperor and Empress, a "contemporary nightmare of an alien, organized, hereditary, non-industrial and immortal criminal class" was gradually tamed and "conquered" by the police and the authorities, who used a wide variety of tactics during the middle years of the century.

The strongest chapters in the book are not those which deal with crime as such but those in which the element of social protest involved in the criminal activity is much more discernible. The excellent account provided here of arson in mid-century East Anglia demonstrates not only the extra-

ordinarily common recurrence of this crime but also the origins of the tensions and hostility which arose out of the class resentments of rural society. Similarly, the chapter on poaching leads directly to a consideration of the social implications of this "crime" for tenants, landlords and propagandists alike.

Jones is true, therefore, to his rather unwieldy title in that he does discuss crime, protest, community and politics but it is only where the crime is invested with wider social repercussions, that all these elements are convincingly treated together. The problem is that, although a good deal of social protest was clearly criminal, it is much more difficult to establish the protest factor in "ordinary" crime. Jones provides a thoughtful introduction, which should prove very useful to students new to the subject, but this discusses the state of research in the field as a whole rather than concentrating on the narrower, but more rewarding, problems raised by his own bracketing of "crime" and "protest".

An *Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1546-1900* (1978) by Crofton, Helen, £16.95. 0 7099 0703 6 is concerned with the words of the book's editor Andrew Charlesworth, with "direct collective actions that occurred in or were of the countryside but were not directly related to industrial, religious or political issues". The work is organized in six principal sections, which include "The Geography of Land Use 1546-1860", "The Geography of Peasant Riots 1585-1847", "The Geography of Protests by Agricultural Labourers 1790-1850" and "Rural Protest in the Nineteenth Century". The book contains sixty-two maps.

## Megalomaniac moguls

Roy Foster

PIERS BRENDON

The Life and Death of the Press

288pp. Secker and Warburg. £12.50. 0 436 06811 7

Piers Brendon has revived, with elegance and distinction, the discipline of digestible history which gave writers like Barbara Tuchman their early success: a "tissue of innumerable biographies" only lightly drawn together with generalizations, strongly accented by anecdote, and written in a style that combines bravura with diffuseness. This is a more substantial achievement than it may sound; the subjects for such an approach need to be carefully selected, the terrain well mapped, and the material produced with a sustained flourish. His new book succeeds on these levels; if it fails to satisfy completely, that may be a fault inseparable from the genre.

It is nonetheless an extremely skillful assemblage, and a good read throughout. The struggles of the moguls who built the popular press reverberate down to us from a lost age, like the conflicts of mastodons; they are sitting targets for sardonic dissection by a latter-day anatomist. Mr Brendon's definition is not always consistent; the implication generally carried by "press baron" is one of proprietorial control plus limitless wealth, but some of Brendon's subjects are, strictly speaking, primarily financiers. By and large, the interest of his cast, from James Gordon Bennett to Lord Beaverbrook, lies in their combination of financial resources with the desire to control public opinion; a conjunction which led swiftly to megalomania and a ludicrous over-estimation of their own power. Many of Brendon's best specimens are American and appear logically in the context of the "big-brother" ethos in big business; by contrast the Hattingsworth brothers appear almost human, and the book winds down to Cecil King and even

Rupert Murdoch with an artful sense of diminuendo.

Transatlantic similarities, like the sense of "conservative populism", apparently inseparable from the desire, and ability to make a great daily paper, are in some ways less obvious than differences. Brendon is sharp and perceptive about "the British tradition that information about public affairs is the private property of the government", which is conspicuously not true of America. But in a book constructed around personalities, the preoccupying theme is inevitably the extent to which great newspaper-makers, in Norman Angell's phrase about Northcliffe, "possessed the common mind to an uncommon degree". Less important in the general picture, but essential to this book's effect, are the private eccentricities which accompanied this characteristic, and the grand delusions in which most of the uncommonly common took refuge.

The temptation to concentrate upon this is all the more marked because many of the general themes regarding the press, and its influence have been already prospected by Stephen Koch and Alan Lee in Britain, and Edwin Emery for America. But the range of sources behind *The Life and Death of the Press* is eclectic and some of the best material, (namely on Pulitzer and Hearst) comes from unpublished manuscript sources. What emerges is on one level a gallery of eccentrics, and on another a series of studies in the tactics of power – whether manifested in the time-honoured strategy of appointing at least two men to the same editorial post and leaving them to struggle for survival, or in the more heady world of unmaking presidents and prime ministers. (One press baron, characteristically, took the process a step further when Lord Rothermere was improbably offered the crown of Hungary, Beaverbrook suggested that he proceed to marry Mrs Simpson and solve everyone's problems by making her his Queen.)

Horace Greeley comes through as most politically powerful; the elder

James Gordon Bennett as most sinister; Joseph Pulitzer as most pathetic. The personalized nature of these judgments is inevitable; Brendon reiterates that his subjects were too individual to fit into any pattern and that the fate of their newspapers was dictated by their personalities and their fortunes. On editorial questions, the patterns that do decide themselves are not altogether surprising, and rather depressing. The calculated trivia of the nineteenth century, like Greeley's one-line "Sunbeam" which confided that "The mules are all dying in Arkansas" or "The Pope denounces short dresses", give way to the excesses of today's tabloids, alternately ghoulish and coy. The barometer of the lowest common denominator plunges lower and lower. At another level, the journalists – especially the political journalists – become a new kind of animal, from a different stable, and are less amenable, or less vulnerable, to over proprietorial delusions. (There may be another book here.)

The barons tend to blur into one conglomerate figure: a distasteful, paranoid, probably of Scottish origin, gross of appetite, violent of temper, humiliating his employees, skulking from the lavatory, ending his days in a restless frenzy. But by the later twentieth century, the risk-averse ventures of the old press barons have given way to the carefully estimated loss-margins of the great corporations. Eventually, Lord Thomson stands in forlornly for the brawling giants of yesterday; and there will be no one to gather anecdotes about him.

Gathering anecdotes is one of this book's major strengths, and any reviewer is tempted to pirate them; but as Brendon must have found, they tend to take over. Some of the stories are slightly familiar, as told of other monsters to other times. Others follow in too relentless a sequence, accompanied by too many digs in the ribs. This can distract from the implicit, or even explicit, conclusions. Mr Brendon must take care; such an ironic and entertaining history should not run the risk of exhausting another race as "deservedly extinct" as the press barons; the *belles-lettres*.



## Divinely divisible

J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz

ALAN WARDMAN

Religion and Statecraft among the Romans

217pp. Granta. £12.50.  
0 246 11743 5

The Romans were a sophisticated and articulate people who have left abundant written testimony about religious practices that seem primitive and pre-literate. Roman religion is therefore not only exceptionally interesting, but also unusually accessible to scholarly investigation. Distinguished scholars have worked on it: F. Wissowa, W. Warde Fowler, H. J. Rose, K. Latte and J. Bayet to mention only a few. In the past there has been a tendency to trace the development of the religion from its earliest origins, rather than to assess the nature and extent of its contribution to the functioning of Roman society. Since the evolution ends with the triumph of Christianity, earlier episodes have too often been interpreted in the light of the final failure. Religious innovation has been treated principally as a symptom of weakness, and a millennium of religious history seen as a prolonged death-bed.

Contemporary historians are less tempted by vistas of evolution and degeneration, and are also more wary of evaluating non-Christian religions by Christian standards. This has opened up new possibilities of understanding. Alan Wardman's book is modern in approach. No longer content to regret that a particular rite has declined to mere formalism, he has tried to show how it helped to consolidate the political system, or otherwise made for social cohesion. He has no difficulty, for instance, in demonstrating that the fact that certain religious practices were manipulated by politicians does not signify that they had become meaningless as religion. Wardman deals with examples only: there is still room for a comprehensive study of religious manipulation in Roman public life.

Above all Wardman has concerned himself with the phenomenon of religious change. He maintains that the incorporation of new gods was not a symptom of religious ill-health, but an essential feature of the system. The effective functioning both of religion and of politics required the frequent admission of new gods. Like the universe in Hyle's steady-state theory of cosmology, Roman polytheism survived seemingly unchanged over the centuries only by continuously

adopting new gods and new rituals, while at the same time shedding old ones that had become irrelevant. Wardman remarks on "the prime need of civic polytheism, the need to replenish the system by introducing new gods", and finds that "Rome was as acquisitive of gods as she was of territory and provinces".

This is an interesting and plausible thesis, and one which takes us to a central problem of organized religion: how can a system which purports to reflect eternal truths be adapted to meet the ever-changing needs of society? Wardman's position is close to that reached by John North in a well-known article in the *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 1976. Wardman includes material not used by North, but in this reviewer's opinion does not advance our understanding of religious change very much further. Analysis must be based on a full presentation of the evidence, and must respect the distinctions thought important by the Romans themselves, no matter whether the modern observer thinks them significant or not. Wardman's presentation of the facts is too blurry, and not sufficiently discriminating. Roman religion did undergo continuous change, but not only, or even mainly, through the acquisition of foreign gods. The

dedication of a new shrine to an accepted deity qualified by a new epithet (eg. to Jupiter qualified as *Feretrius* or *Liber* or *Sator* or *Tonans*), or the new cult of a deified abstraction (eg. *Spes* or *Fides* or *Concordia*) were not thought to involve the introduction of a foreign god, or indeed of a new god, at all.

Roman worship was a precision operation. The divine was infinitely divisible, and in order to achieve a particular objective, an act of ritual had to be labelled very exactly. Unprecedented situations called for new divine addresses. The incorporation of a genuinely foreign god was another thing altogether: it required a special procedure, and became rare after the emergency of the Hannibalic war. When a foreign god was introduced the motive was not so much "a voracious appetite for more gods" as the need to mobilize new supernatural resources. It is true that the Roman authorities usually tolerated gods that immigrants had brought to Rome, but this does not mean that they formally incorporated the tolerated cults into the state religion. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the time of Augustus, found it remarkable how little imported religion had been formally adopted by the Romans. Wardman has some good things to say about the ceremonies introduced by

the emperors, and commonly described as imperial cult. But he does not help our understanding by blurring the differences between these cults of loyalty and the worship of the immortals. Especially he does not take into account the extent to which the cults of loyalty consisted of worship offered to gods on the emperor's behalf as opposed to worship offered to the emperor himself as a god.

Wardman is well qualified to write a book about Roman religion; he is thoroughly familiar with the historical and literary backgrounds. He has not, however, sufficiently considered what kind of readership he was writing. This is in many ways a book for the non-specialist, a general survey, rather than a succession of closely argued studies. Knowledge of ancient languages is not required. Wardman has made reading unnecessarily difficult. The style is allusive, assuming some acquaintance with Roman religion and politics, even with the theories of scholars. A little more background information could have made the book much more accessible; so would a final revision of the text with a view to eliminating obscure or clumsy sentences. A wide public is interested in the Greeks and Romans. It is worth taking a little extra trouble in order to reach it.

## Not a week without a book

Alan Watson

TONY HONORÉ

Ulpian  
303pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
£27.50.  
0 19 825358 3

Among some cognoscenti of Roman law, Tony Honoré's studies of Roman lawyers and legal sources have acquired the status of a cult: akin, perhaps, to that of *Waterhouse Down*. But the comparison should not be pressed: Honoré is not upset by blatant self-contradiction; his scholarship is intact and sloppy despite a vast battery of footnotes (773 this time, in Chapter Two); he continually exaggerates his results; and his original theses (if they were proven, which they are not) are trivial. He obtains his results by sleight of hand, but often he drops the rabbit.

The present book is devoted to the life and writings of the famous jurist, Ulpian, who was murdered sometime before the middle of 224 AD. Its main thesis is, I think, that Ulpian, whose work comprises forty per cent of Justinian's *Digest*, was extremely methodical and set himself a working stint of about a book per week. Most of his writings, we are told, fall within a five-year plan from 213 to 217.

Ulpian's calendar in 213-17 was as follows:  
1 January to 28 February minor works  
8½ weeks  
1 March to 25 August  
25½ weeks major commentaries  
26 August to 21 October  
8 weeks harvest holidays  
22 October to 31 December  
10 weeks medium-scale works

This is qualified on the following page. It is not really suggested, says Honoré, that Ulpian worked like that; he followed the schedule only approximately; he composed the works of different types to some extent concurrently. Still, he did write 25½ books of major commentaries, 18½ books of lesser works per year. The resistance to such a suggestion", Honoré says, "is coloured by romanticism." Since a book of Ulpian's has about thirty pages he kept up an average of 1,320 pages per year.

Now if this thesis were correct I don't think we would have learned much of significance. But Honoré has got to his conclusions mainly by an analysis of style - Ulpian, you will note, had the habit, systematic as he was, of breaking off in the middle of a book, a fact betrayed on Honoré's view by linguistic changes when he picked up again - and one incidental advantage of Honoré's analysis is, he says, that we

can now sometimes tell if the substance of a text is genuine. For instance, D.19.1.13.3 has Ulpian holding that an action on sale lies for making a false statement, which raises the price, in good faith; and the substance of the text is often thought interpolated. The text contains the phrase *et putem*, "I think", which occurs thirty-one times, always in Ulpian and never in other jurists; hence, says Honoré, we have a strong argument in favour of the text's genuineness (p. 85). No, we haven't, I believe. If we accept that *et putem* is Ulpianic, then all we have is an argument that in this text *et putem* is genuine. "And I think he is liable" could just as easily, so far as Honoré's argument goes, have originally read "And I think he is not liable".

But what about the exactitude of the arguments on which his case rests? Four out of many examples. First, he claims, "It looks as if the famous passage of Ulpian on the law of nature, in which he asserts that animals are thought to know about marriage, the procreation of children and their education by experience (*peritio*), and hence not merely by instinct," can lead to conclusions about the jurist (p. 31). But this misrepresents what Ulpian actually says: "The law of nature is that which nature taught all animals . . . hence comes the conjunction of male and female, which we call marriage, hence the procreation of children, hence their upbringing. There is nothing in the text about animals knowing about marriage; and nature could have taught through instinct. The fun in this misrepresentation (and of another piece of evidence, of equal weight) is that it enables Honoré to believe that Ulpian attributed rational behaviour to animals, and that he was a Neoplatonist.

Second, when the Emperor Severus and Caracalla went campaigning in 209, Geta was left in charge of civil business. At this time, on Honoré's reckoning, Ulpian ceased to be secretary *a libello* - Honoré finds a change in style - and "a new secretary was left with Geta to see to the issue of rescripts" (p. 24). Honoré's whole claim, in this book and in *Emperors and Lawyers*, is to identify the style of individual and succeeding secretaries on the (unstated) supposition that only one secretary at a time drafted rescripts. But on the following page Honoré tells us Ulpian wrote books on campaign. "This presupposes that Ulpian had taken his law books and notes to Britain. That the court travelled, even on campaign, with all the documents necessary for carrying on the civil administration, including trials and the issue of rescripts, seems certain in view of the fact that rescripts continued to be issued. So on Honoré's own admission there were two secretaries issuing rescripts at the

same time. If, to claim to identify the style of successive (and necessarily sole) secretaries, he sacrifices the one campaigning with Severus and Caracalla, then he loses his only argument for Ulpian having taken along his library.

Third, in that very significant place where Honoré sets out the criteria for his argumentation, he discusses *happax legomena*, words or phrases that occur only once. "Nothing particular turns on the fact that *suasor* is *happax* in Ulpian, but when we discover that *suasus* is also *happax*, we begin to suspect a fondness for this root. Hence we may suspect, when we come across a text with *suasio*, another *happax* in the legal literature, that Ulpian is the author of the text" (p. 49). Now I confess that I would never have suspected from the fact that, so far as we know, Ulpian used *suasor* and *suasus* once each, and only once, that he had a fondness for that root. Nor, I confess, would I have suspected on that account that *suasio*, occurring once in the legal literature, was the work of Ulpian. But the real joke is that *suasio* is not *happax* in the legal literature; a glance at Heumann-Seckel reveals it also nestling in C.5.59.4 (531) and 9.18.3 (319). In neither of which can it be the work of Ulpian.

Fourth, the argument that Ulpian took a break half-way through Book 31

rests on the observation that seven words or phrases are first found in the Ulpianic corpus either in the second half of 31 or soon after: two in 31/2, three in 33, two in 34. Obviously those in 31/2 are particularly significant. One of these two is *per contrarium quoque* which, Honoré says, occurs four times: 31/2, 32, 32, 34 (p. 145). *Per contrarium quoque* may be one phrase, but it can equally be punctuated *per contrarium, quoque* and mean something rather different. Of its four stated occurrences in Ulpian, in D.17.2.52.18, it is *per contrarium, quoque*. "On the other hand, the *legis* is raised also among the Republican jurists . . ."; in D. 19.1.13.5 it is one phrase, "On the other hand, too, the same Julian writes . . ."; in 19.2.13.25 it does not appear at all; in 25.1.3.13 it could be either one phrase or *per contrarium, quoque*, "on the other hand, also, he says" or "on the other hand, he also says". Of course, the phrase loses all its force as an argument when it is not a single phrase; and this is the case with the sole text from 31/2. The other significant word or phrase, *verumtamen* or *verumtamen* occurs in the second, but not the first half of 31. But it occurs in neither half (nor any quarter) of 33, 34, 37, 38, 41, 42, or 43, and so on; hence I fail to see that its absence from the first half of 31 shows that Ulpian took a longish break half-way through.

## The Kettle

A friend's nubile daughter has left behind her a certain fragrance and in acknowledgement of an all too brief hospitality, this handsome bright object which with scouring pads and elbow grease she has scrubbed as good as new clean as my whistle so that this dark morning when vessels are filled and brought to the boil her more than gift recalls one I used of course to take on my knee who now in massive arms could crush me helpless to her amplitude or with a little care, as befits antiques have me for breakfast.

Keith Bosley

## Between Romans and Normans

Charles Thomas

WENDY DAVIES

Wales in the Early Middle Ages

244pp. 66 figures. Leicester University Press. £22 (paperback, 19.75).  
0 7185 1163 8

Early Wales, that is Wales between the Roman occupation and the Normans, has been well served by her native historians. This is particularly true of specialist history - the Church, place names, institutions and the borderland between archaeology and the historical past; one thinks of the late Hugh Williams and Melville Richards, among those still in the field. E. G. Bowen, Wendy Davies, holder of a readership in medieval history at the University of London, has turned within the past few years to a famous Welsh source, the *Book of Llandaff* or *Llan-dafydd*. Oldest of the medieval Welsh episcopal collections, *Llandaff* contains some lives of saints, letters and consular passages, but above all a weighty collection of charters recorded grants to the bishopric. In two earlier books - *An Early Welsh Microcosm* (1978) and *The Llandaff*

*Charters* (1979) - Dr Davies showed us, firstly, that though the charters are undated they can be separated and stratified into a series that may initially reflect the late sixth century AD; and secondly that much of the ecclesiastical history of south-east Wales can be deduced or, where extant, modified by using these documents. Her studies of Llandaff have occupied her attention for over a decade, but have not precluded work on other topics, in Wales and elsewhere (eg. Brittany). She has now extrapolated from her perception and interpretation of what might be called "the Llandaff area" to deal with the whole principality, between the late fourth - early fifth-century termination of Roman overlordship and the full Norman conquest.

*Wales in the Early Middle Ages* is an important book. Facts (in the sense of documented statements, names, and events), calculations, analogies, light references to Welsh poetry and early laws, and place-names all outweigh the narrative. If the volume seems difficult to read, if it demands, indeed merits, close re-readings, then these are aspects of it inseparable from the rich and complex subject-matter. There are a few illustrative concessions (inscribed stones, manuscript leaves,

etc) and there are plenty of maps and diagrams, carefully thought out, well presented and integrated with the text. This probably is not, nor was intended to be, a history of Early Wales for use in schools (even for sixth forms); Dr Davies likes to write, albeit intelligibly, for a fairly small circle of fellow-scholars who are expected to know the appropriate sources and comparanda already. Any medievalist - any informed person who is prepared to take the trouble - may of course join this readership by diligently following what Dr Davies has to say. Given her book's existence, it will no longer be possible to suppose that Welsh affairs during this period are undocumented.

The course of Insular historiography in the late twentieth century (and I use the handy "Insular" to provide a portmanteau adjective in place of "British-and-Irish"), has been, and is, well worth watching. Some lucky R. G. Collingwood of the year 2000 should catch the next century with a cursing survey of Insular output in this field. As a historian, Dr Davies herself describes, in her introduction, what seem to be her main characteristics. There is a becoming disclaimer ("It is not possible to write a history of early medieval Wales that will stand up to the requirements of

modern scholarship"), attached to the belief that the available sources are - and presumably always will be - quite inadequate to resolve the simplest problems. Of course this is so; in the light, early medieval history tends to resemble certain forms of archaeological inference, being at best the delicate balance of probabilities. Throughout her book Dr Davies is presenting us not with unattainable certainties, but with reasoned likelihoods (some, entirely likely). At least we are informed, at all points, how much the author is prepared to credit.

Secondly, this is a book which may contain a bibliography of several hundred entries but has nevertheless been written from scratch. Its starting-point was Dr Davies's earlier work and private thinking. As she says, it is a good time to consider old assumptions and ask new questions, and practically all previous assumptions concerning Welsh history are treated (even omitted) in this light. Thirdly, the landscape of Wales is never very far from any point in the volume; historians often, archaeologists slightly less often, fail to convey any spatial dimension to discussions of land-grants, church estates, ecclesiastical groupings and analysis of contemporary travels. The most unkind thing one can add about geographers who venture into such spheres is that they draw (or pay to have drawn for them) the least attractive and most illegible maps of all. Dr Davies understands solid geology, contours, and boundaries; her Wales is a place where, disclaimers apart, real people lived in a real countryside and clear, uncluttered maps enable us to follow what may be unfamiliar.

The treatment is by topic, not by period. "Land, Landscape and Environment" leads into four further chapters dealing with economy, secular life and institutions, and the last two cover the impact and growth of Christianity; partly as a faith in itself, mainly through Christian development within the extant Welsh framework. Some of this was foreshadowed in her *Early Welsh Microcosm*; here we have the due enlargement in the larger frame. The book went to press in the autumn of 1980, but a brief note (ix-x) includes a few necessary references added to mid-1981.

*Wales in the Early Middle Ages* is to be most warmly welcomed. Other reviews in the trade journals of Celticism and medievalia will take up

the many specific points; in this context, I am concerned to offer only a generalized *aperçu* of a work that can take its place in the Welsh historical canon, rightly and swiftly. Lastly, I make no apology (as an Old Boy of its controlling board) for a congratulatory bouquet to Leicester University Press. Dr Davies's book is the second in a new series on the early history of Britain, with Nicholas Brooks of St Andrews as general editor. The predecessor (*Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain*, 1981) was exciting, amusing to cognoscenti, weighty and typographically well designed. This Leicester tradition goes back some way, to the days of Herbert Finberg, master-printer turned medievalist. It is eminently desirable to spread the load; to see that imprints should be maintained by as many of our universities as can find (and turn over, sensibly) the money to keep going. In this case Leicester offers a series directly comparable with that great *Early British History* set, edited and partly written by Nora Chadwick, for Cambridge, in the 1950s and early 1960s. That gave British protohistory an overdue shot in the arm; a younger contributor (the sadly missed Kathleen Hughes) then proceeded, virtually solo, to mete out the same ecclesiastical treatment to early Ireland. This impetus must not be lost. Leicester now bids fair to revive it. Enthusiasts of the disciplines involved will appreciate the revival, as they welcome Wendy Davies's fine book, and hope to see further titles worthy to stand alongside.

John J. O'Meara's translation of Giraldus Cambrensis' *History and Topography of Ireland* (*Topographia Hibernica*) has now appeared in a new and revised edition (136pp. Dolmen Press, Mountrath, Portlaoise, Ireland. £10. 0 85105 311 4). During his lifetime, Giraldus, as O'Meara notes in his introduction, continued to add to his original text of 1185, which went through at least four recensions, the first of which is translated here: "the whole story", claims its translator, "remains in its vigour and interest by the omission of extraneous matter", which Giraldus indiscriminately added to his later versions. Of the three sections which make up the work, the second, "The Wonders and Miracles of Ireland", includes intriguing accounts of "A fish with three gold teeth", "The fleas that were banished by Saint Nannon" and "A goat that had intercourse with a woman".

## On the defensive

R. Allen Brown

COLIN PLATT

The Castle in Medieval England and Wales

214pp. Secker and Warburg. £12.50.  
0 436 37555 9

If there is to be another book on the castles of England and Wales, it is good that it should be by Colin Platt. He is well known as a medieval historian and the author of a number of good works. Further, he himself is a rare scholar, who combines both historical and archaeological knowledge and expertise. It may surprise the layman to hear that there is in our time a gulf between the two disciplines, which should obviously be part of the one whole of history.

Moreover, much of the work done on castles since the war, in England and elsewhere, has been by archaeologists by no means always as knowledgeable as they should be about the period and society which their researches ought to illuminate.

For these and other reasons I expected to enjoy and profit by Dr Platt's book, and have indeed done so, though not quite as much as anticipated. To begin with a good point, there is a large number of illustrations (182), mostly plates (black-and-white) though including line-drawings, and a refreshingly high proportion are new in not being reproductions of the usual. Yet even at this level of the make-up of the volume there are snags. There is a glossary but no bibliography, and the absence of the latter is not entirely compensated for by the notes, which are sparing. Those notes, of course, are at the end, to ensure the maximum convenience to the reader. A considerable proportion of the pages are un-numbered, which seems to be the latest step downwards in the former art of bookmaking. The index is minimal, ie, mere Persons and Places with never a subject among them; which is another pity since Platt has interesting things to say on many relevant subjects.

Much of this is unlikely to be the fault of the author, but on turning to Platt's own contribution to the book (and authors still do contribute to publishers' publications), one may still find reservations. To lead off again with the good, one of the strengths of this volume is the very welcome attention given to the later medieval period. Here, the text notably changes gear as Platt really does seek to set his castles in the social and political history of what is clearly his preferred period. But this virtue has its

reverse side, for the earlier centuries are less surely dealt with, and one may feel also that a comparative lack of familiarity with that formative period leads the author into some unacceptable historical notions which are then played right across the medieval board. The Revolving Barons and its concomitant, the Anti-Baronial Policies of Kings, lurk in these pages. On one occasion we read of "the perennial contest between king and aristocracy", and on another we even meet the dreaded "overnight subject". It is at least misleading to write of "private" castles and "private" war without any qualification or explanation for the general reader or the student, who will have already been encouraged at school to think of the Middle Ages as a prolonged if chivalrous feudal punch-up. It is, moreover, plain wrong to equate private war with castles, and public war with communal fortifications.

One may also have doubts whether the later medieval centuries were as different from the earlier as Platt makes them seem. Chivalry most certainly was not invented in the fourteenth century but in the eleventh. I cannot see why some of the author's later castles are any more ostentatiously "monuments to chivalry" than their predecessors. Similar doubts are prompted by the emphasis placed by Platt in common with other historians of the later Middle Ages, upon the luxury and conspicuous expenditure of the lords of that period in contrast with "the austerities of the past". The *dolce vita* was not invented in the fourteenth century either, and no lord I know would have felt either uncomfortable or austere in Henry II's Dover, or William the Conqueror's Tower of London. One may wonder, too, about the novelty and the danger in these later medieval centuries of "swollen retinues", some of which might have seemed beneath their dignity to Norman and Angevin lords of old. Orderic Vitalis remarked of Hugh earl of Chester that he moved about not with a household but an army.

The book is valuable for the large number of good and up-to-date (except for Rochester) descriptions it contains, with illuminating parallels drawn with French castles along the way. However, it is doubtful if the plan of the text as a commentary upon a series of standing buildings arranged in chronological order is entirely satisfactory, especially (once again) for the earlier period. Many castles (and, misleadingly, fortified manors) of one build and single date may survive from the later Middle Ages, yet the typical architectural history of the typical English castle remains that of an early foundation followed by continuous development on the same site. One

may doubt also if the general architectural history of castles can be presented as an affair of continuous progress and innovation. Certainly most of the principles of medieval fortification, including flanking fire and concentric defences, go back a very long way indeed. One sympathizes with the difficulty Platt must have had in arranging all his abundant material, though one must protest at the labels he has invented in so doing. It would be dreadful if such bogus categories of castles as those "of the Hundred Years War", "of law and order", and "of chivalry" were in any way to stick.

One finishes this book therefore feeling a certain disappointment that it is not as good as expected, albeit full of good things. One is left with a faint taste of book-making, and of writing in response to a commission and a deadline, instead of the after-glow from reading something long cogitated and intended.

## Getting slowly about

Jonathan Sumption

MARGARET WADE LABARGE

Medieval Travellers: The Rich and Restless

237pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.50.  
0 241 10086 1

Very few medieval men can have relished travel for its own sake. Horses were expensive and slow; carriages were expensive, slow and dangerous as well as unsprung; most travellers had to do without either and make use of their feet which were slower still. Except on the sea voyage to Jerusalem (efficiently organized by the Venetians) there was no tourist industry to ensure that a meal and a bed were in the right place at 6.00 pm. To travel hopefully was distinctly worse than to arrive.

What makes the discomfort of travel tolerable to us is a body of romantic prejudices which the Middle Ages did not share. The love of empty landscapes, an eighteenth-century luxury would have been incomprehensible to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. "Locum honoris ac vastae solitudinis" wrote an abbot of St Albans about the Claudian Way near Lake Bracciano. That delight in folkly tableaux of the past, the chief magnet of tourists since the first half of the nineteenth century, was not for the likes of him, nor any of his contemporaries so far as we can judge.

The picturesque was only squalid or dangerous.

Margaret Wade Labarge has concentrated her attention on "rich and restless" travellers: the vast mobile households of the royal families and the higher nobility, the magnificent cavaleries which accompanied ministers and ambassadors about their business. Apart from the occasional solitary ecclesiastic, even the most modest travellers who feature in this book were accompanied by a select group of servants and friends. Her choice has the advantage of allowing a wealth of colourful detail. And why not? The twentieth century is a poorer place for not having the like of Niccolò d'Este, who travelled to the Holy Land in 1413 with a personal retinue comprising some dozens of porters and orderlies, two chefs, a tailor, a barber and a page, a chaplain, two trumpeters and an official historiographer.

Although the official historiographer strikes a special note of vainglorious indulgence, his presence at least marks a measure of curiosity on his master's part. Curiosity was not uncommon among noble travellers and almost unheard of among those whose travels were exclusively within Europe. The great travel literature of the late Middle Ages was not written by the rich and restless. With a handful of exceptions it was written by merchants (mostly Italian) and clergy of quite modest means and status. The best travel literature of all was the work of the friars John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck, and the merchant Marco Polo, whose

accounts offered European readers their first detailed (and on the whole) accurate information about the Far East. The silence of the rich and famous about their own travels may be an accident of survival, but it is far more likely to be due to the fact that even in an immobile society travel was for them a matter of routine, seen with the glazed distant eyes of the modern drip-dry businessman.

At the very end of Mrs Labarge's period, in the middle of the fifteenth century, the great are beginning to emulate their inferiors. The Burgundian knight Bertrand de la Brocquiere, who explored much of the Levant, Turkey and the Balkans in the 1430s, dressed like a native, learned some Arabic and Turkish and wrote a remarkable account of his travels which includes one of the best surviving descriptions of medieval Damascus. He had curiosity. In the next two centuries there were to be many more noblemen of his kind.

Mrs Labarge's is an enjoyable undemanding book, shatteringly anecdotal, which suggests few general conclusions. It is filled with the kind of picturesque detail which her subjects would have thought unimportant. At the same time it is a book which could not have been written without a very thorough knowledge of the scattered sources for the domestic life of the aristocracy of the late Middle Ages. For those who wish to know how men travelled, rather than what they saw, the best book remains that ancient masterpiece, *English Wayward Life in the Middle Ages* by J. J. Jusserand.



